

A DEEPER "WELL OF ENGLISH UNDEFYLED" : THE  
ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF ANGLO-SAXON IN  
NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
POETRY : WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO  
HOPKINS, POUND AND AUDEN

Chris Jones

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
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**Twentieth-Century Poetry, with Particular Reference to**  
**Hopkins, Pound and Auden**

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Submitted for the Degree of PhD.

School of English  
University of St. Andrews

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## Abstract

This thesis challenges the assumption that Chaucer is the father of the living English poetic tradition. Nobody would deny that poetry existed in a form of English before the fourteenth century, but it is commonly assumed that linguistic and cultural changes have made Anglo-Saxon poetry a specialist area of concern, of no use or interest to modern poets. It is demonstrated that during the nineteenth century, advances in linguistic and textual scholarship made Anglo-Saxon poetry more widely available than had been the case, probably since the Anglo-Norman period. Knowledge of Anglo-Saxon literature is subsequently communicated to poets, particularly after the subject is institutionalized in English departments at British and American universities. Chapter One charts this rise in awareness of Anglo-Saxon poetry and considers its effects on several nineteenth-century poets (William Barnes, Henry Longfellow, Alfred Tennyson and William Morris). Major studies then follow of Gerard Hopkins, Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden and the uses that they make of Anglo-Saxon in their own poetry. It is argued that through these writers Anglo-Saxon has had a more important impact on modern poetry than has been thought previously. Moreover, Anglo-Saxon is often included as part of a poetics that might be called 'modernist'. For each of the three poets under study, the nature of their contact with Anglo-Saxon poetry is determined from documentary evidence (whether at university, or via secondary literature), and different stylistic debts are examined by close readings of a number of poems. No previous work has attempted a detailed analysis of the uses to which these three writers put Anglo-Saxon poetry. This thesis offers such an analysis and synthesizes the different approaches to Anglo-Saxon in order to provide an overview of this phenomenon in nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry.

## Declarations

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## Note on Quotation from Anglo-Saxon and Transcription

Textual editions of Anglo-Saxon poems are not used with uniform consistency throughout the thesis. Where it is possible to ascertain that a poet knew and used a certain edition, that has been the preferred text for dealing with that writer. For example, references to Anglo-Saxon poems in the chapter on Pound are from the seventh edition of Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. *Beowulf* is normally referred to using George Jack's edition: he was characteristically generous with help and advice in the early stages of this project. In all other cases Krapp and Dobbie's editions of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* have been used in accordance with standard scholarly practice.

When quoting, either from unpublished letters, or from works published under different historical conventions, it is my practice not to correct, modernize or standardize orthography. For this reason, spelling in quotations may differ from my own practice (I use 'mediaeval', but some of my sources use 'medieval'). The only standardization I have undertaken is with punctuation. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications it was a conventional practice to leave one space before, and two spaces after the colon, semi-colon and exclamation mark. I have silently removed this extra spacing throughout, in accord with current practice.

## Contents

Introduction Wells of English	8
Chapter One Chewing the Cud	24
Chapter Two Hopkins: 'Sole Civilized Fruit' of a 'Brain-Starved Plodding'?	56
Chapter Three 'Banging up the Big-Bazoo': Pound's uses of Anglo-Saxon	115
Chapter Four Auden and 'the Barbaric Poetry of the North': unchaining one's daimon	170
Conclusion Pulling the Voice into the Ring of the Dance	251
Bibliography	260
Appendix I Chronological Table of Publications, Scholarship and Poetry	281
Appendix II Hopkins's Examination Syllabus for Moderations	296
Appendix III Pound's Unpublished Essay, 'The Music of Beowulf'	303
Appendix IV Scansion of 'Canto I'	310
Appendix V Saxonist Work by Later Poets	312



## Wells of English

Continuing where Chaucer left off his *Squire's Tale*, Spenser remarks of 'Dan Chaucer' that he is the 'well of English vndefyled' and that, in an act of literary metempsychosis, the earlier poet's spirit has infused with his own.<sup>1</sup> Chaucer was recognized by his own generation as a founding figure,<sup>2</sup> but his status as the father of English poetry was by no means guaranteed. In the fifteenth century, he often shared his laurels with Gower and Lydgate.<sup>3</sup> In the sixteenth century he began to acquire a reputation as a difficult or obscure writer, of interest mainly to radical Protestants, who saw him as a satirist of the established church.<sup>4</sup> No doubt this was part of Spenser's attraction to Chaucer, but the Elizabethan court also demanded origin myths, suited to the emerging sense of national pride and confidence: a sense of historical tradition needed to be reaffirmed for the burgeoning English literary scene.<sup>5</sup>

Spenser was not the first to place Chaucer at the head of the English tradition, but, due to his own influence, he became the most effective. As historical perspective lengthened, it seemed more apparent that Spenser was the first major figure in English poetry since

<sup>1</sup> Book IV, Canto ii of *The Faerie Queene*, stanza 32, line 8 and stanza 34. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977), p. 439. A similar claim, that 'the pure well head of Poesie did dwell' in the 'gentle spright' of 'old Dan Geffrey', is stated in Book VII, Canto vii, stanza 9, lines 3-4 (p. 725).

<sup>2</sup> In 'The Life of Our Lady', John Lydgate praises Chaucer 'That made firste, to distille and rayne / The golde dewe dropes of speche and eloquence / Into our tunge'. Cited in *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Derek Brewer, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), I, 46.

<sup>3</sup> See Caroline Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (New York: Russell & Russell, 1925, 1960), I, pp. xviii-xix. Also Janette Dillon, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> See Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years*, pp. xix-xxi and Dillon, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, pp. 144-7.

<sup>5</sup> A. Kent Hieatt frames Spenser's claims on Chaucer in a Europe-wide cultural context: 'Spenser discovered in Chaucer not only a part of the ready-made, usable national literary past which was demanded in each language of Western Europe at the Renaissance, but also a fictional world adaptable to the particular synthesis of sixteenth-century poetic and narrative fashions towards which Spenser's temperament carried him.' A. Kent Hieatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton: Mythopoeic Continuities and Transformations* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 18.

Chaucer: the successor's compliment confirmed the master's status. From the Elizabethan period there was to be no serious challenge to the idea that Chaucer is the fountain of English poetry until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Spenser, who self-consciously archaizes in order to imitate Chaucer's linguistic effects, not only wishes to pay homage to his predecessor, but to position himself close to the source of Chaucer's influence, reinventing mediaeval poetry for his own aims. So great is his achievement in this respect, that for many subsequent poets, Spenser was the actual father of English poetry in all but name. For romantically-inclined mediaevalizing poets like Chatterton and Keats, Spenser's version of Chaucer seemed authentic enough. *The Faerie Queene* is national epic enough: there was no need to search for roots further back in literary history. Spenser bequeathed more forms than most poets would ever need to draw on and his dream-like, contextually unanchored interpretation of mediaeval romance could be colonized with impunity by writers who did not have an accurate historical sense of the period. The first modern mediaevalizer came to overshadow the supposed source of the tradition.

Yet there is a deeper well of English which poets have occasionally drawn on for inspiration. It is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate that Anglo-Saxon poetry, far from being a specialist area of concern, of interest only to historians of language, is still part of the live tradition of English poetry. Anglo-Saxon is an Ur-English, and the 'father of English history' has left us the story of the Ur-poet in English. Although in Latin,

<sup>6</sup> Even in 1891, one could read: 'it is natural that a book which aims at including the best that has been done in English verse should begin with Chaucer, to whom no one has ever seriously denied the name which Dryden gave him, of the Father of English poetry.' *The English Poets*, ed. by Thomas Ward, 4 vols (London: Macmillan, 1880; repr. 1891), I, 1. Apparently, Charles Muscatine wrote, in 1960, that 'in the history of the literature in English, Chaucer is an anomaly. He has no significant predecessors.' Cited in P.

Bede's story of Cædmon and of the first recorded English poem reached an audience long before most other works from the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>7</sup> A worker at the seventh-century monastery at Whitby, the unlettered Cædmon would leave his feasting companions when the harp approached his place at table and retire to the cattle-shed. After one such occasion, he is granted the gift of composing poetry by visitation in a dream. Following a divine instruction, Cædmon immediately improvises verses in English about God's creation. These impress the abbess of Whitby so much that she advises he abandon the secular life and devote himself to his divine gift. Bede's account makes Cædmon the symbolic father of English poetry and his coming-over from inarticulation into song enacts the coming into being of an English literature from the silence of its pre-textual pre-history. For modern readers Cædmon represents a possible challenger to the orthodox hegemony of the twin ancestors of Chaucer and Spenser. Visits by modern poets to this deeper well of English became increasingly frequent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when (this thesis contends), they effected modest but significant changes on the tradition of poetry in English.

Knowing where to begin a study of the uses that later poets have made of Anglo-Saxon is not straightforward. The potential range of the subject is vast. Coleridge's 'Christabel'

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M. Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, 2 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), I, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham Wheloc produced the first edition in both Latin and English of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* in 1643. See Frederick Metcalfe, *The Englishman and the Scandinavian; or a comparison of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Literature* (London: Trübner, 1880), p. 13. In 1655 Francis Junius and William Marshall produced a text of the Junius Manuscript poems under the title *Caedmonis monachi paraphrasis poetica Genesisios* ('The poetical paraphrase of Genesis by the monk Cædmon'), initiating the tradition that Cædmon's creation poems must have included the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis*. See Henry Morley, *English Writers: An attempt towards a History of English Literature*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Cassell, 1887), II, 108. John Smith produced another edition of Bede in 1722 and in 1826 Conybeare printed Latin and Anglo-Saxon texts with a modern English translation of Cædmon's *Hymn*. John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. by William Daniel Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), pp. 3-7. Thereafter the story and poem become extremely well-known through a panoply of editions, translations, anthologizations and critical accounts. See Appendix I.

has been likened to Anglo-Saxon in its use of accentual rhythm.<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth wrote on several Anglo-Saxon subjects, including Bede's account of the conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria.<sup>9</sup> Milton's Satan has been compared to the Satan of *Genesis B*.<sup>10</sup> Layamon's *Brut* is written in an archaic English, but at a time when its pseudo-Anglo-Saxon was probably not the entirely foreign language it was to seem a few centuries later.<sup>11</sup> Recently, it has even been suggested that *Beowulf*, rather than being mainly derived from pre-Viking Age Scandinavian sources, might be a late and sophisticated re-working of material largely native to Anglo-Saxon tradition (skilfully combined with continental material).<sup>12</sup> The pre-history of Saxonising writing is extensive.

<sup>8</sup> Coleridge's own description of the metre, 'founded on a new principle', in his preface to 'Christabel', does suggest a superficial similarity to Anglo-Saxon verse forms: 'counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each one the accents will be found to be only four.' Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Christabel 1816* (repr. Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991), p. vii. However, the strong mid-line caesura which characterizes Anglo-Saxon verse is only an intermittent feature of 'Christabel' and, as the professed minimum number of seven syllables suggests, consecutively stressed syllables are also a rarity (the owl's call of the third line being a notable exception). Nevertheless, in 1902 it was claimed that the metre of 'Christabel' was not new, but 'had been in constant use in English for twelve centuries'. Mark H. Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study of English Poetry* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> See William Wordsworth, *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, ed. by Abbie Findlay Potts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922). Sonnets 9 to 32 of part 1 deal with Anglo-Saxon history or pre-history (pp. 124-35), and sonnet 1.16 reworks the sparrow episode from Bede (p. 127). Curiously, Wordsworth does nothing with Bede's story of Caedmon.

<sup>10</sup> Speculation about the possible influence of *Genesis B* (before it was known by that name) on *Paradise Lost* was frequently aired in the nineteenth century. Typical is the antiquarian Charles Knight who, before quoting a passage of Thorpe's translation of the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis*, writes: 'The Anglo-Saxon Paraphrase of Caedmon was printed at Amsterdam in 1655. Can there be a question that Milton had read the passage which Mr. Thorpe thus translated?' Charles Knight, *Old England: A Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Baronial, Municipal and Popular Antiquities*, 2 vols (London: the author, 1845), I, 79. See also Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), IV, 385-6; Metcalfe, *The Englishman and the Scandinavian*, p. 131; Morely, *English Writers*, 2nd edn, II, 109.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Layamon and the linguistic choices he makes for the *Brut*, see Carole Weinberg, 'Victor and victim: a view of the Anglo-Saxon past in Layamon's *Brut*', in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 22-38.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Anderson, 'Formation and Resolution of Ideological Contrast in the Early History of Scandinavia' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), pp. 117-42. Anderson thinks that the traditions evidenced in *Beowulf* might lead to 'corrections' of a parallel Scandinavian tradition during the late Viking Age.

Moreover, why is the focus on Anglo-Saxon? Norse and Middle English poetry have attracted many imitators and could equally be included in a thesis about poetry which appeals to the ideal of 'pure' or 'native English' roots: Scandinavians and Saxons were thought of as part of the same racial stock,<sup>13</sup> particularly in the nineteenth century, and, as demonstrated above, Chaucerian English was often considered 'pure' until the nineteenth century. Early Celtic literature might also be co-opted into an argument concerned with 'literary primitivism' and would have brought writers like James Macpherson, W. B. Yeats and David Jones closer to the centre of this thesis. Joyce once claimed 'one of the most interesting things about present-day thought in my opinion is its return to mediaevalism'.<sup>14</sup> 'Mediaevalism' is itself an enormous field, the study of which requires full examination of the influence of European writers, as well as consideration of the phenomenon's painterly, architectural, political, religious and social dimensions: the use of Anglo-Saxon by poets is one small aspect of this subject.

Several possible authors were dismissed from this study because the supposed influence of Anglo-Saxon on them is too tenuous or hypothetical. 'Christabel' may be an experiment in accentual metre, but without other documentary evidence that Coleridge was interested in Anglo-Saxon poetry (which I have not been able to find), the possibility of a link is mere speculation. Milton was certainly a friend of the antiquarian Junius, who is often thought of as the first editor of Anglo-Saxon poetry.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Milton

<sup>13</sup> In 1907, A. R. Waller, an editor of *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, takes this fact for granted when writing: 'English literature, as we know it, arose from the spirit inherent in the viking makers of England before they finally settled in this island'. A. R. Waller, 'The Beginnings', in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. by A. A. Ward and A. R. Waller, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907-16), I, 1-6 (p. 1). For more information on this view, see T. A. Shippey, 'The undeveloped image: Anglo-Saxon in popular consciousness from Turner to Tolkien', in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, pp. 215-36.

<sup>14</sup> See Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, ed. by Clive Hart (London: Millington, 1974), p. 91. Although none of the conversations are dated, they are all post-1922.

<sup>15</sup> A letter from Junius' nephew, Isaac Vossius, to his friend Nicholas Heinsius, on 8 July 1657 makes it clear that Milton and his uncle were friends, but Milton biographer William Parker judges that they were



consulted sources such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* when researching his *The History of Britain* in the early 1640s (it was not published until 1670).<sup>16</sup> During this time Junius may have reported the contents of the Anglo-Saxon codex which bears his name to his friend Milton, although contact between the two men had been broken with Junius's foreign travels by the time his edition of the 'Cædmonian poems' was brought to print in Amsterdam, 1655. Yet again, this evidence is too flimsy to adduce a reading knowledge of Anglo-Saxon poetry, or to claim a direct line of influence from *Genesis B* to *Paradise Lost*, as nineteenth-century antiquarians did. It is true that in his *History* Milton describes the style of *The Battle of Brunanburh*, but it is not with admiration; the poem is 'over-charg'd' and full of 'extravagant Fancies', an impression as likely obtained from the Latin as the Anglo-Saxon.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, without further proof that T. S. Eliot actually read Anglo-Saxon, one can only conclude that if A. C. Partridge's claim is true that 'his contribution was the re-instatement of Old English falling rhythms',<sup>18</sup> then this must be either accidental, or via the mediating influence of Ezra Pound (although the influence of *Piers Plowman* on the line of *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Four Quartets* is plausible).<sup>19</sup> It is part of the methodology of this thesis to

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likely acquainted before 1657, perhaps during Milton's marital separation in 1642-5. See William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), II, 986. Also *A Milton Encyclopaedia*, ed. by William Hunter and others, 9 vols (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1978), IV, 174-5.

<sup>16</sup> John Milton, *The History of Britain*, 2nd edn ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1670, 1677; repr. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1991). Milton must have used Abraham Wheloc's editions of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, which came out in 1643-4. Scholarly opinion is unanimous that Milton relied on the Latin versions of the texts and had little or no reading knowledge in Anglo-Saxon. See *A Milton Encyclopaedia*, I, 51 & 133 and IV, 175.

<sup>17</sup> Milton, *The History of Britain*, Book V, 263. Fred Robinson also holds it likely that Milton was reading the poem in Latin. See 'Two Aspects of Variation in Old English Poetry', in Fred Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf and other essays on Old English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 71-86 (pp. 71-2).

<sup>18</sup> A. C. Partridge, *The Language of Modern Poetry* (London: André Deutsch, 1976), p. 257.

<sup>19</sup> Eliot's 1927 essay, 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation' suggests that he was familiar with *Piers Plowman*. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn (London: Faber, 1951), pp. 65-105, (p. 103). Helen Gardner compares a passage from *Burnt Norton* with *Piers Plowman*. See Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, 3rd edn (London: Faber, 1964), p. 31. Also Edwin Morgan, in the introduction to his *Beowulf*, trans. by Edwin Morgan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), pp. xx-xxii.

prove an empirical link between a modern poet and Anglo-Saxon, using the documentary evidence of letters, memoirs and essays.<sup>20</sup>

This appeal to authorial intentionality (and indeed the chapter structuring of the thesis) flies in the face of certain strands of literary theory which have criticized 'author-centred' readings of literature.<sup>21</sup> Having worked with literature in which 'the author is dead' in ways more profound than Roland Barthes could imagine,<sup>22</sup> and with literature for which a wealth of secondary documentary evidence has survived, I think it expedient to make use of whatever resources and methods are available, as is appropriate. Where the concept of the author can be availed of, I am happy to avail. Conversely, psychoanalytical readings are of little use to the main line of present enquiry. For this reason the theories of Harold Bloom are not deployed, a fact which may seem surprising for a poetry PhD. with the word 'influence' in its title. *The Anxiety of Influence* sets too much store on the individual talent, and not enough on tradition to provide a satisfactory model for the influence of mediaeval writing. What's more, the post-Freudian emphases of Bloom's thesis limit its application historically, intelligent and witty as it is.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The opposite approach is taken by Henry Wells, who was content to argue that 'it may not be clear whether the recent author knows his Anglo-Saxon in the original, in a literal translation, or not at all. He may have been attracted to another poet who himself is at one or two stages removed from the Old English. Frequently all that can, or need be said is that in one way or another a genuine tradition is ascertainable.' Henry Wells, *New Poets from Old: A Study in Literary Genetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 35. I do not believe that such an approach is rigorous enough.

<sup>21</sup> For example Robert Young suggests that the role of the author in most literary criticism is 'to resolve the discontinuities of discourse into a harmonious totality'; a role which he wishes to subject to a 'process of interrogation'. The advantage of such a process is apparently that 'a Foucauldian analysis would highlight and analyse' differences in the work of a single author. Robert Young, 'Post-Structuralism: An Introduction', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Routledge: Boston, 1981), pp. 1-28, (pp. 11-12).

<sup>22</sup> Authorship of the Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus is mainly anonymous and in any case, whatever the concept of 'the author' may have meant to a mediaeval community of writers and readers, it was undoubtedly different to what is understood by that term today. See C. S. Lewis, 'The Genesis of a Medieval Book', in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 18-40. Also J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature 1100-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 29-31.

<sup>23</sup> Or is this merely an act of critical *clinamen*? Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 14.

Good reasons for setting chronological boundaries to the subject also present themselves. An historical shift in emphasis occurs during the nineteenth century which suggests a natural delineation of the potential range of material. Before textual and linguistic scholarship makes intimate knowledge of Anglo-Saxon poetry a possibility, mediaevalizing interest focuses on the late middle ages rather than early; history rather than literature; trappings and furniture rather than style; content rather than form.<sup>24</sup> Chatterton and Wordsworth occasionally wrote on Anglo-Saxon subject material, but they did so in more familiar forms.<sup>25</sup> Keats found it easy to admire Chatterton because:

He is the purest writer in the English Language. He has no French idiom, or particles like Chaucer - 'tis English Idiom in English words. [...] English ought to be kept up.<sup>26</sup>

By the late nineteenth century such a (linguistically inaccurate) view was becoming less common. The new discipline of comparative linguistics, based on the more scientific methods of German philologists, had put Anglo-Saxon scholarship on an altogether different footing. Printed editions of poems based on these 'scientific' principles became more common, as did formal instruction in Anglo-Saxon language and literature at colleges and universities throughout the English-speaking world. There is a qualitative development in the kind of influence exerted by Anglo-Saxon which keeps pace with developments in scholarship and distribution of texts. Inevitably, the story of the influence of Anglo-Saxon on modern poetry is bound up with that of the development of

<sup>24</sup> A good account of the relationship between romances and Romanticism, and of the mediaevalism of the period, can be found in David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism, VII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> For example, Chatterton's 'Battle of Hastinges', 'Ælla: A Tragycal Enterlude' and 'Ethelgar. A Saxon Poem', in *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton*, ed. by Donald S. Taylor and Benjamin B. Hoover, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), I, 26-43, 174-228 & 253-5. For Wordsworth's material from Bede, see note 9.

<sup>26</sup> From a letter to J. H. Reynolds of 21 September 1819. *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), II, 167. On the same day, in writing to George and Georgina Keats, he expresses almost exactly the same opinion: 'The purest english I think - or what ought to be the purest - is Chatterton's - The Language had existed long enough to be



English Studies as a discipline, and the position of Anglo-Saxon studies within that discipline. As the purpose of this thesis is to concentrate on those authors who have incorporated elements of Anglo-Saxon style into their work, a great deal of writing from the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries has been excluded.<sup>27</sup>

The first chapter proper, 'Chewing the Cud', sketches in something of the scholarly, philological and literary background to the place of Anglo-Saxon literature in the nineteenth century, against which the figures of Hopkins, Pound and Auden take their place. A brief outline of the earlier interest in Anglo-Saxon antiquities is first given, noting the religious and nationalist, rather than literary impulses behind pre-nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon scholarship. There follows an account of the more important editions and anthologies through which Anglo-Saxon poems were presented to a wider Victorian audience, and of the critical reputations with which those poems were attended. Reference is also made to some of the more popular writings about language itself. Attempts were made by several Victorian poets to accommodate elements of Anglo-Saxon within their work: these often met with mixed success and failed to become a part of common poetic currency. Nevertheless, they are important as pre-cursory raids on the locked warehouse of Anglo-Saxon stylistic devices. They demonstrate that more 'modernist' engagements with Anglo-Saxon verse did not come unannounced from the clear blue skies of literary experimentalism, as well as giving a measure of the success of poets like Hopkins, Pound and Auden. For these reasons, brief consideration is given to the Teutonizing work of William Barnes and Henry Longfellow, Tennyson's translation of *The Battle of Brunanburh* and William Morris's version of *Beowulf* (which post-dates

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entirely uncorrupted of Chaucer's gallicisms and still the old words are used - Chatterton's language is entirely northern - I prefer the native music of it to Milton's cut by feet'. *Letters of John Keats*, II, 212.

Hopkins's work, but is dealt with here in the context of the cul-de-sacs of Victorian Anglo-Saxon-influenced verse).

Chapter Two deals with Hopkins's Anglo-Saxon-inspired innovations. For years the nature of his 'sprung rhythm' has vexed scholars, and the possible relationship between it and the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon poetry is periodically put forward for consideration, often inconclusively. Regarding Hopkins's Anglo-Saxon connection, it is argued that diction and syntax are more important than metre: moreover that the influence of Anglo-Saxon does not come to Hopkins from a direct knowledge of any poem, but is at one remove, via writings about Anglo-Saxon by nineteenth-century philologists. Some of the material in this chapter is synthetic rather than new, although the conclusion drawn from this material has not previously been presented in this framework.

In many respects, Hopkins's technical experiments with Anglo-Saxon anticipate those of modernist poets. 'Modernism' itself is a much fought-over term, but the literature of the 'teens and 'twenties clearly has its roots in late Victorian thought and writing and cannot be understood or defined without reference to that period. It is therefore without embarrassment that Hopkins is included within the parameters of this argument as a proto-modernist. Despite the valuable work done by scholars in re-contextualizing Hopkins as a Victorian, and saving him from a de-contextualized New Criticism, Hopkins remains ambiguous: ambiguous both in his relationship to poets of his own life-time, whose values and concerns he shares, and poets of the 'teens and 'twenties (Hopkins's publication debut was in 1918), whose techniques he anticipates. I find it appropriate to

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<sup>27</sup> For information on how images of the Anglo-Saxons have been used for the furtherance of various religious, political and nationalist agenda, see *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*. Almost all the contributors deal with these issues.

link him to Pound as a kind of linguistic primitivist: when one thinks of Pound's debt to William Morris the link seems less remote.

Ezra Pound is the subject of the next chapter and in many ways he is central to the argument of the thesis. As the engine-room of modernist poetry in English, and its master craftsman in terms of technique, his influence, both direct and indirect, is immense. His significance for other poets could be expressed in inverse proportion to his profile with the reading public. It is commonly assumed that Pound's engagement with Anglo-Saxon poetry is limited to the dual skirmishes of his translation of *The Seafarer* and its bearing on the genesis of 'Canto I'. For a long time, and perhaps even today, the translation was often considered, in a narrow, scholarly light, as a ham-fisted collage of anachronisms and misunderstandings; its connection with 'Canto I' taken for granted, nebulously expressed and scarcely analysed. Building on the work of Michael Alexander and Fred Robinson, this chapter attempts a description of how 'Canto I' is like Pound's 'Seafarer' and, more importantly, why. Previously undetected Anglo-Saxon elements in later cantos are then discussed, and arguments are advanced about what this Anglo-Saxon mode means to Pound.

According to the narrative of this thesis, Hopkins represents the point at which Anglo-Saxon is successfully incorporated into a poetics we may regard as pre-figuring modernism; Pound is the central figure in justifying this innovation, although his achievements are often regarded as idiosyncratic; Auden however signifies the consolidation of these experiments with Anglo-Saxon, and their return, in a less self-conscious manner, to the formal mainstream of British poetry. The last of the three core chapters is devoted to Auden. His assimilation of Anglo-Saxon effects within a more

conservative style does not happen immediately, nor is it without its share of false starts. Much of the chapter deals with his early and indulgent Anglo-Saxon mannerisms and anticipates how they are later accommodated into a more profound, moving public voice.

Demands imposed by the narrative about modernist poetry have necessitated that some writers, who could have been considered between the poles of Hopkins of Auden, have been neglected. Robert Bridges, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien all deserve attention regarding their Anglo-Saxon connections, but time and space have not permitted their inclusion. The conclusion makes a glancing attempt to consider some of the developments in Anglo-Saxon-influenced poetry subsequent to Auden. Basil Bunting, Seamus Heaney, Geoffrey Hill and Edwin Morgan gain brief mention. At an earlier stage of the research it was hoped that more space be devoted to these, and other figures. Unfortunately, the demands of the three major authors have conspired against that possibility. As compensation, an appendix listing relevant work by more recent poets has been included: it is intended to draw on this material for future research.

Hopkins, Pound and Auden may seem strange bedfellows, but this thesis demonstrates that their shared interest in Anglo-Saxon is not superficial, but part of a deeper concern with ideas about decaying language. Differences, as well as similarities in their use of Anglo-Saxon are documented, for they form a significant, but previously over-looked component of wider literary-primitivist responses to the anxiety about decadent language (often thought typical of modernism). As the subject has not yet been adequately documented, this thesis catalogues those differences and similarities of usage in as much detail as possible, to place the importance of Anglo-Saxon to the three poets beyond doubt. For the sake of thoroughness, attention is often focused on linguistic and stylistic

minutiae, but criticism and interpretation is offered where appropriate and after the technical debts have been established.

A few other explanatory remarks need to be made. Although the influence of Anglo-Saxon poetry was to be the prime object of study, it became apparent that it was impossible to separate the poetry itself from the various critical and philological contexts through which it was presented to later reader-poets. For this reason the subject developed into the influence of both Anglo-Saxon poetry and language. Related to this point is that the contemporary received wisdom on Anglo-Saxon metrics, language or literary style, is often more relevant to this study than current knowledge and opinion. Historical misunderstandings of Anglo-Saxon may be more interesting in the hands of a talented poet than strictly accurate reinterpretation.

Initially, I was wary of writing about verse translations of Anglo-Saxon. If the intention is to argue the influence of Anglo-Saxon on modern poetry, are translations, even creative translations, not irrelevant, at best a side-show? A translation is not a modern poem. I am now convinced that such a view is folly, based on fundamental, though common, misconceptions about literary translation. Samuel Johnson's 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' is as much a poem belonging to its own time and place as any of Johnson's other 'original' work, regardless of its parent poem, Juvenal's tenth satire. A similar claim can be made for Pound's 'The Seafarer'. Translation and creation are not different in kind, but only degree. The mediaeval writers whose influence this thesis examines would not have understood any such prejudicial division and there is no reason to impose it on writers at the nearer end of literary history. Indeed, recent literary theory should have seen off the prejudice against translation once and for all. If all literature is inter-textual,

translation clearly lies at the centre, not the margin, of literary discourse. As George Steiner has argued: 'translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in *every* act of communication' (his emphasis).<sup>28</sup> Not only is there a parity between the act of translating and the act of composing: the former might be thought of greater importance in demonstrating the validity of this thesis. Translation provides the exact environment in which cross-fertilisation between languages and literatures may occur: it has justly been called 'a transfer of cultural energy'.<sup>29</sup> Effects and devices which a poet would not have entertained for a 'primary composition' may be introduced into a national body of literature by the distorting pull of a foreign poem's magnetic field. Once admitted into a legitimately 'English' form, the innovation may then easily gain wider currency. Richard Peaver, a translator of Tolstoy, has made the distinction between translation which attempts to assimilate the original into the new language and translation which allows itself to be 'strongly affected' by the original, to effect 'a shaping of the new language to the "foreignness" of the original'.<sup>30</sup> As examples of this type of translation, Morris's 'The Tale of Beowulf', Pound's 'The Seafarer' and the closely paraphrased nuggets of Anglo-Saxon which are embedded throughout Auden's early poems have as much right to be present in this study as Hopkins's 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', Pound's 'Canto I' or Auden's *Age of Anxiety*.

A lengthy debate about whether pre-conquest literature should be called 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Old English' seems to have resolved itself in favour of the latter term. Yet for the purposes of this study 'Anglo-Saxon' has been chosen, simply as it allows new

<sup>28</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: aspects of language and translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. xii.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Alexander, 'Old English Poetry into Modern English Verse', *Translation & Literature*, 3 (1994), 69-75 (p. 70).

<sup>30</sup> Richard Peaver, 'Being true to the Russian master', *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 15 December 2000, *MLA Supplement*, p. 6.



terminology to be calqued, avoiding the need for clumsy circumlocutions such as 'poetry influenced by Anglo-Saxon'. By 'Saxonist' poetry, I mean work which is written in direct imitation of Anglo-Saxon literary style or language; 'Saxonised' is synonymous. By 'Saxonesque', a less intentional, possibly even accidental likeness to Anglo-Saxon effects is intended. A 'Saxonism' is a specific example of 'Saxonist' writing.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that there are huge political and cultural implications raised by the notion of a 'pure' form of English, not all of which can be dealt with here. That Anglo-Saxon provides poets with an 'undefiled' English tradition is, in one sense, not contentious: linguistically it is the root of modern English and the earliest recorded poetic forms in the language are in Anglo-Saxon.<sup>31</sup> It is controversial to argue, as Barnes did explicitly (and as other poets may have believed), that these earliest linguistic and poetic forms are more valuable than those of later, cosmopolitan English; that returning to Anglo-Saxon poetry as a model is a measure of superior taste and practice. As Anglo-Saxon is a Germanic language, and nineteenth-century theories of race attached a great deal of significance to the political ascendancy of nations of supposed Aryan stock,<sup>32</sup> such arguments about a national literature may seem profoundly discomforting to the post-

<sup>31</sup> The linguist Charles Barber traces the majority of modern English forms to the East Midland dialect of Middle English, 'itself mainly descended from the Mercian dialect of Old English'; Charles Barber, *The English Language: a Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 145.

<sup>32</sup> The idea has earlier roots. See Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. by J. B. Bury, 4th edn, 7 vols (London: Methuen, 1906), I, 213: 'the most civilized nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany, and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners'. Sharon Turner writes: 'the present composition aspires to relate the history of this celebrated nation, with whose antiquities our present state is so essentially connected.' *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), I, 2-3. Almost a century later Francis B. Gunnere argues that the Normans were 'no founders of England, but only generous contributors; immigrants'. He sees the founders of England and the English race as the Anglo-Saxon invaders. *Germanic Origins: A Study in Primitive Culture* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1892), pp. 1-2. See also Morley, *A First Sketch*, 8th edn, p. 11 ('the Scandinavian element is chiefly represented in the character, form, face, and provincial dialects of our north country'); and John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People*, rev. by L. Cecil Jane, 2 vols (London: Dent, 1915), I, 1-2 (the first 'Englishmen' lived in 'Old England', or Sleswick). Kwame Anthony Appiah's article on 'Race' is a useful introduction to ideas about Anglo-Saxon race in the nineteenth century, but individual

Second World War liberal mind. A great deal is at stake in the difference between 'pure' meaning 'unmixed', and 'pure' as an expression of moral worth. However, a cultural agenda need not correspond exactly to a political agenda and the abuse of ideas of race, nation and language does not mean that they are all false. Linguistic nativism overlaps with imperialist discourse in a variety of ways (especially a shared rhetoric), but that does not mean they share a common set of values.<sup>33</sup> A well of undefiled English poetry is not identical to a well of undefiled English race, or even a well of undefiled English language, although they may all draw on similar underground currents.

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comments need qualification. See *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 274-87.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, a variety of nineteenth century discourses draw on the rhetoric and narrative of Gibbon's history (itself based on Tacitus's *Germania*), which taught the British middle and upper classes that a huge Empire had previously decayed because the barbarians at its frontiers were more vigorous and energetic than the inhabitants at its heart: 'This diminutive stature of mankind [...] was daily sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pigmies, when the fierce giants of the north broke in and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom'. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, I, 58. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, supporters of British imperialism advocated active and aggressive engagement with the peoples on the frontiers of civilization, not (only) to subdue them, but so the revitalizing energy of contact with the primitive might renew the heart of the Empire and ensure 'an ennobling and invigorating stimulus for our youth, saving them alike from the corroding ease and the morbid excitements of Western civilization'. Lord George Nathaniel Curzon, *Frontiers: The Romanes Lecture 1907* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), p. 57. Compare Pound's cultural and linguistic narrative that 'Rome rose with the idiom of Caesar, Ovid, and Tacitus, she declined in a welter of rhetoric, the diplomat's "language to conceal thought", and so forth [...] a people that grows accustomed to sloppy writing is a people in the process of losing grip on its empire and on itself.' Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber, 1951), pp. 33-4. More generally, see David Trotter, 'Modernism and Empire: reading *The Waste Land*', *Critical Quarterly*, 28 (1986), 143-53.



## Chewing the Cud

After relating the story of Cædmon and his God-given gift of poetry (referred to in the introduction), Bede writes that the Abbess of Whitby ordered Cædmon to be instructed in scriptural history:

So Caedmon stored up in his memory all that he learned, and like one of the clean animals chewing the cud, turned it into such melodious verse that his delightful renderings turned his instructors into auditors.<sup>1</sup>

Having absorbed the biblical story and its commentary, Cædmon is able to recycle it, not as learning, but as poetry. The same principle applies to the writers in this study and their use of Anglo-Saxon scholarship. However, with no cud to chew there can be no output: the quality, quantity and nature of what is stored up in a poet's memory will have an obvious effect on what can be done with it. For a long time, there was simply not enough evidence to challenge the view, commonly held since the Renaissance, that Chaucer was effectively the father of English poetry. While Chaucer's reputation may have dipped in the sixteenth century,<sup>2</sup> it never declined to vanishing point and after Dryden it became unassailable. Conversely, political and linguistic changes had long ensured that, for the general reader, Anglo-Saxon became an unknown language. By the late sixteenth century, when interest in Anglo-Saxon antiquities was beginning to be revived, much poetry must have been lost and the live tradition had been sundered irrevocably somewhere before Chaucer. Without access to texts, and the ability to read them, poets could not store up and chew the cud of the longer tradition of English poetry for which

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<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. by Leo Sherley-Price, rev. by R. E. Latham (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> See Janette Dillon, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 145.

this thesis argues. It will therefore be necessary to survey what was known about Anglo-Saxon poetry, and when and how it was made available.<sup>3</sup>

### Antiquarianism

The road to recovery begins during the English Reformation, when churchmen become interested in the Anglo-Saxon past, hoping to find evidence there for a nascent English Church, not dependent on Rome.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately that evidence was to be found wanting, but a by-product of interest in the early Church, and also in the legal system of Anglo-Saxon England,<sup>5</sup> was that the linguistic tools needed to read Anglo-Saxon poetry gradually became available. Today, the canon of Anglo-Saxon poetry for undergraduates in universities throughout the English-speaking world is remarkably consistent. *Beowulf*, *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Dream of the Rood* and a selection of the lyrics or elegies from *The Exeter Book* are ubiquitous. Yet it took centuries for taste and educational institutions to reach this uniformity. Not surprisingly, it was the religious poetry which initially received attention. Francis Junius and William Marshall became the first modern editors of Anglo-Saxon poetry when they published the *Cædmonis Monachi Paraphrasis poetica Genesios ac præcipuarum Sacræ Paginæ Historarium* in 1655 (containing the

<sup>3</sup> Historical surveys of Anglo-Saxon scholarship have been undertaken before, but the focus of interest is usually on the rise of academic professionalism: see 'The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism' (first published in 1975) in E. G. Stanley, *Imagining the Anglo-Saxon Past: 'The search for Anglo-Saxon paganism' and 'Anglo-Saxon trial by jury'* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), and Daniel Calder, 'Histories and surveys of Old English literature: a chronological review', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 10 (1982), 201-44. I believe the following account is the first attempt to look at this material for the information it makes available about poetic form, and to place the activities of poets within this framework. See also appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> See David Douglas, *English Scholars 1660-1730*, 2nd edn (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), p. 19; Calder, 'Histories and surveys of Old English literature', p. 201; Michael Alexander, 'The cult of Anglo-Saxon and the literary canon', *Parergon*, 10 (1992), 1-14 (pp. 3-4).

<sup>5</sup> The nature of the Anglo-Saxon constitution became a political brickbat for many years, as Christopher Hill describes in his chapter on 'The Norman Yoke'. Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1958), pp. 58-125. The pre-conquest liberties which were supposedly guaranteed under Anglo-Saxon law were also championed by Thomas Jefferson, who wished to make Anglo-Saxon one of the building blocks of the American education system. See Francis W. Hirst, *Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (London: Macmillan, 1926), pp. 555-6 & 565-8.

poems now called *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*).<sup>6</sup>

However, poetry remained the poor relation among Anglo-Saxon antiquities until the early nineteenth century.

Studies of the language experienced a thirty- or forty-year-long renaissance at Queen's College Oxford, after a lectureship in Anglo-Saxon was instituted there in 1679 (held first by William Nicolson and later by Edward Thwaites). The industry of the scholars grouped around Queen's found its climax in George Hickes's monumental *Thesaurus* (1705).<sup>7</sup> In this work Hickes attempts to provide all the grammatical information (and a good deal of lexical information, such as an extended list of common synonyms) required for a reading knowledge of several mediaeval Germanic languages. Anglo-Saxon poetry is a small area of his concern, although he does give prominence to *The Battle of Brunanburh*, quoting Henry of Huntingdon's Latin version of it in the preface to his *magnum opus*.<sup>8</sup> Later, the full Anglo-Saxon text of *Brunanburh* is given, together with extracts from several other poems, including those of the Junius Manuscript, *Judith*, the metrical preface to Alfred's Boethius, the poem in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 975 on Edgar's death, the *Finnsburh* fragment and the *Menologium*.<sup>9</sup> The poems are all laid out one verse per line (i.e. by half-lines). This convention endured for about a century and a half, and encouraged the similarity between Anglo-Saxon and Old Icelandic scaldic verse to be over-emphasized. It also masked the structural integrity of the whole line, making it more difficult for the reader to perceive the functional purpose of alliteration in Anglo-Saxon metre. Hickes clearly has trouble describing the metre: he is

<sup>6</sup> See Henry Morley, *English Writers: An attempt towards a History of English Literature*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Cassell, 1887), II, 108.

<sup>7</sup> George Hickes, *Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archæologicus*, 2 vols (Oxford: [Clarendon (?)], 1705).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. xiii-xv.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 177-208.

wedded to the idea of a regular syllable count in each half-line, and, while aware that it is an unsatisfactory theory, tentatively suggests that, for the most part, there existed *versus ex quatuor syllabis constantes* and *versus ex sex syllabis constantes*.<sup>10</sup>

Humphrey Wanley's catalogue of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts makes up the second volume of Hickes's *Thesaurus*, and as it is Wanley's frequent practice to quote the beginnings and endings of many items, his catalogue contains extracts from several poems for the first time. In this way, some twelve verses of the poem now known as *Maxims II* are printed and described as *Carmina quædam proverbialia*.<sup>11</sup> *Beowulf* also receives its first notice in print here, and its opening 'preface' is quoted in full. It is often complained that Wanley entirely misunderstood the poem: he writes that it concerns Beowulf, *quidam Danus* ('a certain Dane'), and the war he wages against *Sueciæ Regulos* ('the kings of the Sueci' [Suevi?]). Wanley may have not grasped the details of the plot, but his taste is superior to many who followed him: he calls the poem *Tractatus nobilissimus Poeticè scriptus* and that *Poeseos Anglo-Saxonicae egregium est exemplum*.<sup>12</sup> As for *The Exeter Book*, Wanley's entry plainly shows his uncertainty regarding the contents of the codex. Apart from the explicitly Christian material, such as *Christ* and *Juliana*, the best he can offer for most of the second half (including lines he quotes from *Widsith*), is that they are *in Ænigmatibus*; a reasonable conclusion.

Two other notable achievements are made in the early eighteenth century by the Oxford-based group. In 1726 Thomas Hearne first printed the text of *The Battle of Maldon* in an

<sup>10</sup> 'Verses [i.e. half-lines] composed of four syllables' and 'verses composed of six syllables'. Ibid., I, 186.

<sup>11</sup> 'Certain proverbial songs', Ibid., II, 219.

<sup>12</sup> 'A most noble treatise written poetically' and 'it is an outstanding example of the poems of the Anglo-Saxons', *ibid.*, II, 218-9.

appendix to his edition of John of Glastonbury's Chronicle.<sup>13</sup> Of more relevance to the present argument is that in 1715, Elizabeth Elstob produced her *Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue*, 'First given in English [i.e. for the first time not in Latin] with an Apology for the study of Northern Antiquities. Being very useful towards the understanding our ancient *English* Poets, and other Writers.'<sup>14</sup> Elstob is not important for advances in the understanding of Anglo-Saxon poetic form. She follows Hickes in trying to find a coherent syllabic system to describe the metrical structure, although she modifies Hickes's typical verses of four or six syllables, to verses of four or five.<sup>15</sup> She is ignorant of the functional purpose of the alliteration, and only after remarking that the poets occasionally use internal and end rhyme does she comment that: 'sometimes they pleas'd themselves with Words beginning alike'.<sup>16</sup> Elstob's defensive preface is revealing about the poor general state of the subject, despite the work of the Queen's Saxonists. She lays great rhetorical emphasis on Anglo-Saxon as the 'Mother Tongue' and therefore an appropriate object for study by women: this is, in fact, her professed reason for presenting the grammar in a more accessible medium than the patriarchal language of Latin.<sup>17</sup> Part of this 'feminising' strategy is the use of grammatical terminology based on Anglo-Saxon roots, rather than the standard terms of Latin-derivation. This also has the advantage of

<sup>13</sup> See Kathryn Sutherland, 'Byrhtnoth's Eighteenth-Century Context', in *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. by D. G. Scragg (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 183-95.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Elstob, *The Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue* (London: W. Bowyer, 1715; repr. Menston: Scolar Press, 1968), title page.

<sup>15</sup> 'The Saxon Verses consist of three, four, five, six, seven, eight, or more Syllables, but for the most part of four or five Syllables, with which the *Poets* now and then intersperse Verses of fewer or more Syllables, as their fancy directs, without any seeming Exactness of Order or Regularity. Verses of four and five Syllables are most current, where the Warmth of the Poet hastens as it were, and precipitates the Vigour of his Stile.' *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69. No doubt the 'alliteration' of vowels and the fact that alliteration was not placed on initial, unstressed prefixes obscured the facts.

<sup>17</sup> 'Considering the Pleasure I my self had reaped from the Knowledge I have gained from the Original of our Mother Tongue, and that others of my own Sex, might be capable of the same Satisfaction: I resolv'd to give them the Rudiments of that Language in an English Dress.' *Ibid.*, p. ii. Further references are placed in the main body of the text.



demonstrating the capacity of Anglo-Saxon for sophisticated intellectual analysis, for Elstob is concerned at the popular perception that the language is primitive and barbaric:

I have given most, if not all the *Grammatical* Terms in true old *Saxon*, from *Ælfrick's* Translation of *Priscian*, to shew the *polite* Men of our Age, that the Language of the Forefathers is neither so barren nor barbarous as they affirm, with equal Ignorance and Boldness. (ii)

Wide-spread ignorance of the importance of Anglo-Saxon as the 'Original of our present Language' (ix), galls Elstob:

It must be confest that in the *Saxon*, there are many *Primitive* Words of one Syllable, and this to those who know the Esteem that is due to Simplicity and Plainness in any Language, will rather be judged a Virtue than a Vice: That is, that the first Notions of things should be exprest in the plainest and simplest manner. (xi-xii)<sup>18</sup>

### Linguistic nativism and primitivism

Elstob's book is remarkable not only for being the first Anglo-Saxon grammar in English, but also because it anticipates the most important strands of debate about the subject for the next two hundred years.<sup>19</sup> Here, at the height of Augustan refinement, we find, fully formed, the 'nativist' theory of language which was to become a dominant ideology in British linguistics in the late nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The nativist theory is often allied, as it is here, to the campaign for plain language, and therefore shares something with the impulse behind Wordsworth's Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*.<sup>21</sup> Proponents of nativism wished to rid English of vocabulary derived from languages other than Anglo-Saxon, not only when the 'foreign' word is obfuscating (as would find support with the plain English

<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Sutherland judges that in the 'Apology for the study of Northern Antiquities', Elstob has in her sights Jonathan Swift, who had attacked students of Old English in a publication of 1712. Kathryn Sutherland, 'Elizabeth Elstob', in *Medieval Scholarship*, ed. by Helen Damico (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 59-73 (p. 67).

<sup>19</sup> If Elstob does not actually set the agenda for debate it is because her contribution was early and long ignored. Sutherland notes how Elstob was 'forgotten for almost a century' and then 'remembered, briefly and with a certain masculine condescension' in the early nineteenth century. Sutherland, 'Elizabeth Elstob', p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> We have already seen how the Renaissance admirers of Chaucer made a similar claim on the strength of his nativist credentials and Christopher Hill comments on the political expediency of 'linguistic revolts against Gallicisms' during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; *Puritanism and Revolution*, p. 80n. Elstob appears to be the first writer to advance the argument from a more philologically-informed position.

lobby), but on the principle that a native term is simply better than an imported one. In what this superiority actually resides varies from nativist to nativist, or is often silently taken for granted.

Another battlefield for debate which Elstob stakes out in her preface concerns the level of sophistication of Anglo-Saxon language and poetry. Confronted with areas of great ignorance (such as the nature of the metre, and oral-formulaic composition), and committed to the enlightenment idea of progress, many writers could not avoid the conclusion that Anglo-Saxon poetry is unsophisticated, barbaric, primitive, raw, crude. These words are repeatedly used to describe Anglo-Saxon literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Contrary claims, that Anglo-Saxon poetry is the product of a sophisticated literary culture, are rare and do not gain currency until the twentieth century. By the late nineteenth century it has become a common strategy (and one which Elstob articulates here), to claim, not that Anglo-Saxon literature is sophisticated and refined, but that its barbarous state is wholly admirable in its own right. 'Primitive' simplicity,<sup>22</sup> in Elstob's words, might 'rather be judged a Virtue than a Vice': the critic's language is turned on its head and negative value-judgements are reversed.<sup>23</sup> This primitivist theory was fuelled by tales of the 'Noble Savage' Amerindians,<sup>24</sup> and by

<sup>21</sup> Preface to the 1802 *Lyrical Ballads*, in *William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 595-615.

<sup>22</sup> Henceforth 'primitive', 'native', 'pure' and all their related forms will not be placed in quotation marks.

<sup>23</sup> See also John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, vol. 2, chapter 6, in which the term 'gothic' is cleansed of its negative associations and placed in opposition to Mediterranean styles of architecture: 'the savageness of Gothic architecture, merely as an expression of its origin among Northern nations, may be considered, in some sort, a noble character.' *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), X, 184-204.

<sup>24</sup> On the similarity between Anglo-Saxon and Amerindian poetry, Thomas Percy writes; 'The first attempts at composition among all barbarous nations are ever found to be Poetry and Song. The praises of their Gods, and the achievements of their heroes, are usually chanted at their festival meetings. These are the first rudiments of History. It is in this manner that the savages of North America preserve the memory of past events: and the same method is known to have prevailed among our Saxon ancestors before they quitted their German forests. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. by Thomas Percy, 3rd edn, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), III, pp. vi - xxxix. Anglo-Saxons continue to be likened to New World

Gibbon's diagnosis of the Roman Empire's fall being due to the inability of its aristocracy to meet the challenge posed by the Noble Savage Germanic barbarians (itself foreshadowed by Tacitus' *Germania*).<sup>25</sup> This primitivism becomes a crucial aspect of the cultural background to the appropriation of Anglo-Saxon by poets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By the early eighteenth century, there exist full texts for a handful of poems (those of the 'Junius Manuscript', *Brunanburh*, *Finsburh*, *Maldon*), and these in expensive and scarce, scholarly publications. Only one Anglo-Saxon grammar in English had been produced: that was targeted primarily at women and appears to have made little long-term impact. Anglo-Saxon prosodic structure is misunderstood to be a dysfunctional version of the accentual-syllabic metres then dominant. This is not much to go on for a poet looking for inspiration in the Anglo-Saxon past, even if that poet could get beyond the prejudices about barbarous crudity. No further reason is required to explain why poets are not particularly interested in Anglo-Saxon as source material during this period. After the Queen's College renaissance, there is little improvement in knowledge until the appearance of Sharon Turner's multi-volume *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799-1805).

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primitives. Sharon Turner compares 'our' Anglo-Saxon ancestors with 'our' Maori colonial subjects: 'The New Zealanders are at present (1827) in a state very like that of the Anglo-Saxons when they visited England, and display much of the same mixture of active mind, high spirit, fearless boldness, unfeeling cruelty, and barbaric ignorance which distinguished our ancestors. Some of them even appear to have been cannibals, and yet one of their milder spirits can thus express himself: [...]'. Turner then quotes from a Maori poem to the wind (in the original and with English translation), noting that 'the reader may compare their mode of versification with the Anglo-Saxon'. Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 6th edn, 3 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1836), II, 262.

<sup>25</sup> C.f. Gibbon, cited in note 32 of the Introduction. Compare this with Lawrence Binyon's remarks, almost a century and a half later, in a lecture to the English Association: 'the slow decay of Roman civilization, at once destroyed and reanimated by the injection of crude vigour from without', Lawrence Binyon, *Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry*, English Association Pamphlet, LXIII (London: English Association, 1926), p. 5. The whole of the *Germania* is pertinent. Tacitus, *The Agricola and The Germania*, trans. by H. Mattingly, rev. by S. A. Handford (London: Penguin, 1948, 1970), pp. 101-41.



### Towards Turner

Before arriving at Turner we can briefly sketch in the rest of the eighteenth century.

Percy's work does not fully embrace Anglo-Saxon literature, but makes passing reference to it. *Northern Antiquities* (translated from Paul Henry Mallet's *Introduction a l'Histoire de Dannemarc etc.*), first appeared in 1755 and contained the 'Our Father' in Anglo-Saxon, but says little of Anglo-Saxon poetry except that 'the same mode of versification' as that of alliterative, Scandinavian Scaldic verse 'was admired by our ancestors, and hath not wholly been laid aside much more than two centuries among our English poets.'<sup>26</sup>

Percy elaborates on this in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, in which he is more perceptive about Anglo-Saxon prosody than the more professional Hickes (or Turner), despite the fact that the subject is incidental to his main purpose (which is really Middle English poetry and the ballad tradition). In his essay 'On the Metre of Pierce Plowman's Vision', Percy first describes Icelandic alliterative poetry, saying that:

Every distich should contain at least three words beginning with the same letter or sound. Two of these correspondent sounds might be placed either in the first or second line of the distich, and one in the other: but all three were not regularly to be crowded into one line.

He suggests that the Anglo-Saxon line was formed on a similar, if less strictly observed, principle of two distichs bound by alliteration (the first recognition of the importance of the mid-line pause), before stating that:

If we examine the versification of PIERCE PLOWMAN'S VISIONS, we shall find it constructed exactly by these rules; and therefore each line, as printed, is in reality a distich of two verses [...] So that the author of this poem will not be found to have invented any new mode of versification, as some have supposed, but only to have retained that of the old Saxon and Gothic poets; which was probably never wholly laid aside, but occasionally used at different intervals.

Percy then quotes extracts from several poems in order to prove that this alliterative measure continues into the Early Modern period.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Percy, *Northern Antiquities*, 2nd edn, 2 vols, (London: T. Carnan, 1755, 1770), I, 401-2.

Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* testifies to the low status of Anglo-Saxon studies in the mid to late eighteenth century. Anticipating complaints that he should have started his survey with 'a view of the Saxon poetry', he defends himself by saying 'that the Saxon language is familiar only to a few learned antiquaries' and 'that our Saxon poems are for the most part little more than religious rhapsodies'.<sup>28</sup> Price's 1824 edition of Warton gives more space to Anglo-Saxon, but is largely dependent on Turner, and *The Battle of Brunanburh* is the only poem to receive detailed attention.<sup>29</sup>

As an historian, Sharon Turner does not invest much enthusiasm in Anglo-Saxon poetry,<sup>30</sup> although he is perceptive about certain details. He notes the tendency to syntactic inversion and:

...the omission of the little particles of speech, those abbreviations of language and thought which contribute to make our meaning to be more discriminatingly expressed and more clearly apprehended. [...] The omission of these particles increases the force and dignity of the phrase, but requires a greater exertion of the mind to comprehend the sense, because as it reads it must gain the habit of instantaneously and almost imperceptibly supplying them.<sup>31</sup>

Turner also perceives the importance of the device of 'variation', although he does not value it, for despite thinking *Judith* a 'striking specimen', he opines that its 'repetition of phrase is the substitute for energy of description' (393-5). This ambiguous response is also apparent in his account of *Beowulf* (the 'most interesting of the remains of Anglo-Saxon poetry'). He corrects Wanley's account of its plot, but with one that is scarcely more accurate: 'it is a narration of the attempt of Beowulf to wreck the fæththe or deadly feud on Hrothgar, for a homicide which he had committed.' He also criticizes the

<sup>27</sup> *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3rd edn, II, 270-82.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, 4 vols, rev. by Richard Price (London: Thomas Tegg, 1774-81, 1824), I, 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. xxix-xlii & lxxxvii-cii.

<sup>30</sup> 'The vernacular poetry of the Anglo-Saxons had not soared far above a peculiar versification when it first appears to our notice.' Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), IV, 375.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 375-60. Further references to volume IV of the first edition are placed in the main body of the text.

digressive narrative of the poem, writing of the *scop*'s performance at Heorot: 'the transition to this song is rather violent, and its subject is abruptly introduced'. Turner seems not to have read the whole work, for although he notes that there are forty-two 'sections' of the poem in the manuscript, he only gives extracts up to the point where Unferth challenges Beowulf (398-408).<sup>32</sup> Regarding metre, Turner contradicts Hickes over the counting of syllables, but has little else to offer. He states that 'occasional rhyme and occasional alliteration' do not 'form its constituent character.' Rather, 'the words are placed in that peculiar rhythm or cadence which is observable in all the preceding extracts'. Despite having admitted ignorance in this area, Turner still chastises Anglo-Saxon poets for metrical sloppiness: 'when their words would not fall easily into the desired rhythm, they were satisfied with an approach to it, and with this mixture of regular and irregular cadence all their poetry seems to have been composed' (409-17). By comparison, his far greater admiration for the language is obvious:

This language has been thought to be a very rude and barren tongue, incapable of expressing any thing but the most simple and barbarous ideas. The truth, however, is that it is a very copious language, and is capable of expressing any subject of human thought. (511)

Turner's popular work certainly stimulates a fresh interest in the subject (it was reprinted several times during the nineteenth century), and it paves the way for John Josias Conybeare's *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1826), which, a century after Hearne's text of *The Battle of Maldon*, begins to address the need for more texts of poems.

### Conybeare and Beyond

Edited by his brother William, and published after John Conybeare's death, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry* makes huge advances in understanding the form of the poetry.

<sup>32</sup> By the sixth edition, Turner has included more extracts, but they all concern Beowulf's exploits as a young man. There is nothing from the last third of the poem, and the dragon-fight is not mentioned, even in summary. Turner, *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 6th edn, II, 288-307.

Conybeare is the first to notice that the predominant rhythms are falling and permit clashing stresses: 'analogous therefore to the trochee or dactyl, sometimes perhaps to the spondee, of classic metre'.<sup>33</sup> He also notices that the verse is stress-based and that the number of unstressed syllables varies: 'the system, if system it may be called, is neither more nor less than that of our old ballads, *in which the ear is satisfied not by the number of syllables, but by the recurrence of the accent, or ictus*, if one may call it so.'<sup>34</sup>

Conybeare also recognises, possibly for the first time, that alliteration falls primarily on the stressed syllables (xxvii-xxviii). He follows Turner in deprecating the list-like accumulation of synonyms, characteristic of 'rude and illiterate' peoples and devoid of 'higher graces and resources of composition', while at the same time favourably likening the balance of grammatical clauses in Anglo-Saxon to the parallelism of sacred Hebrew poetry (xxviii-xxix). To modern scholars, the incremental, near-repetition of words and of phrases are considered twin aspects of the common device of 'variation': it is interesting to see Conybeare consider them separately and with such differing judgement. The preface, concluded by William Conybeare, also acknowledges the existence of occasional verses with more than two 'feet' (in effect, hypermetric lines) and that any vowel is permitted to 'alliterate' with any other vowel (xxxv). With varying degrees of accuracy, Conybeare identifies all the major characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetical form, particularly the most striking differences from nineteenth-century accentual syllabics (Edward Sievers's 'five types' of permissible metrical pattern in the half-line will confirm and refine Conybeare's claims, rather than overthrow them).

<sup>33</sup> John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. by William Daniel Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), p. xi.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv. Here, he also remarks that Southey and Coleridge have employed a similar principle and 'the latter, in one of his prefaces [to 'Christabel'], has, if my memory serves me, philosophized upon its structure.' Further references are placed in the main body of the text.

As to the illustrations themselves, it is still Conybeare's practice to print texts one verse to the line, often with a Latin translation in the facing column of print. When English translations are given, they normally come after (or sometimes below, as footnotes) the Saxon-Latin dual text, and are curiously printed with two verses to the line. The book, contains a full text of the 'Riming Poem'; a translation of *The Battle of Maldon* (called the 'Death of Byrhtnoth'), which is pronounced to be 'remarkably free from the tautology and repetitions which too often impart a feeble and puerile character to the compositions of our Saxon writers', and surprisingly like Homer; Caedmon's *Hymn* (which 'will scarcely be thought to merit the praises bestowed on it by the historian') and Bede's 'Death-Song'; *Widsith* (called 'The Song of the Traveller' and thought to be 'very ancient'), followed by a partly stanzaic English translation; extracts of 'cantos' from an 'Anglo-Saxon Poem Concerning the Exploits of Beowulf the Dane', 'ranking among the most perfect specimens of the language and versification of our ancestors'; 'The Battle of Finsborough', again with a stanzaic translation; 'Specimens from the Junian Caedmon'; extracts from the *Exeter Book*, including riddles, religious hymns, 'Phoenix', 'Gnomic Poem', 'Scaldic Song' (*Deor*), 'Exile's Complaint' and 'The Ruined Wall-Stone'; King Alfred's Boethius and 'Norman-Saxon Fragment on Death (The Grave)', a poem which would now be considered early Middle English, rather than Anglo-Saxon.<sup>35</sup>

Here, at last, is meat in plenty for any poet interested in re-working Anglo-Saxon traditions. Textual resources appear with increasing frequency during the next decade. In 1830, the industrious Benjamin Thorpe translates into English an Anglo-Saxon grammar by the Dane Erasmus Rask (his former teacher, and a proponent of the new science of

<sup>35</sup> Preserved in the manuscript Bodl. 2406 (f. 170a), and probably from the twelfth century, 'The Grave' is described as 'twenty-five lines of alliterative non-riming verse' in *The Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 559.

philology on comparative principles). In 1832, he produces a new edition of the poems of *The Junius Manuscript* and in 1834, publishes his *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica*, the subtitle of which shows his designs for the subject within British universities: *A Selection, in Prose and Verse, from Anglo-Saxon Authors of Various Ages; with a Glossary. Designed Chiefly as a First Book for Students*. In the preface to the *Analecta*, Thorpe complains that the 'old vernacular tongue of England' receives more attention abroad than in the country where it was once spoken, and hopes that his glossed texts will address that cause for national shame.<sup>36</sup> This concern is voiced frequently throughout the early years of the nineteenth century and patriotism becomes one of the driving factors behind Anglo-Saxon studies in this period. Thorpe prints texts for surprisingly few poems (prose being more appropriate to a 'first book for students'), and his choice is also surprising: 'A Dialogue between Saturn and Solomon'; 'The Death of Byrhtnoth, or, the Battle of Maldon'; 'Judith',<sup>37</sup> 'The Grave' (the same 'Semi-Saxon' poem that Conybeare prints); 'The History of King Leir and his Daughters' (also in Semi-Saxon); 'Extracts from the Ormulum'; finally, a spell 'to restore fertility to land rendered sterile by witchcraft'.<sup>38</sup> The practice of printing Anglo-Saxon poetry one verse to the line endures in Thorpe's work.

In 1833, John Mitchell Kemble (who had studied under Jacob Grimm) strikes a patriotic blow for Anglo-Saxon studies with his first English edition of *Beowulf*. The victory may have been moral rather than actual, for Henry Morley complains that only one hundred copies of this edition were printed and it was probably not until 1837, when Kemble's two-volume edition with prose translation and glossary was completed, that the poem

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Thorpe, *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1834), p. iii.



really had any chance of reaching a wider audience in Britain.<sup>39</sup> The proliferation of texts and editions becomes so great from the 1840s that it hardly demands closer study here. By the appearance of Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* in 1876, something similar to the contemporary teaching canon had been established, although the actual institution of a School of English at Oxford (through which knowledge of Anglo-Saxon poetry could be disseminated) was not made until 1894 and English-only degrees were not possible at Cambridge until 1926 (London and provincial universities often taught Anglo-Saxon at some level much earlier). Literary history and philology continue to throw up ideas and opinions pertinent to this study.

By the time of Thomas Wright's survey work *Biographia Britannica Literaria* (1842), a number of viewpoints had crystallized into hard, literary facts. National pride insists that the very length of the English poetic tradition is in itself praiseworthy and ample justification for the study of Anglo-Saxon.<sup>40</sup> That the literature is both primitive and noble is taken for granted:

Life itself, and the language of life, were in those early ages essentially poetic; man lived and acted according to his impulses and passions; he was unacquainted with the business-like movements and feelings of more civilized existence.<sup>41</sup>

This myth of a linguistic golden age, in which life and language were practically synonymous (the sign and the signified are undivided), becomes a major motif of the primitivist theory of language and is sounded by writers on language such as Richard

<sup>37</sup> 'This fragment, perhaps, more than any other composition, leads us to form a very high idea of the poetic powers of our forefathers. The entire poem, of which this probably formed but an inconsiderable portion, must have been a noble production.' Thorpe, *Analecta*, p. viii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> Henry Morley, *English Writers, The Writers Before Chaucer* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864), p. 267.

<sup>40</sup> 'It may truly be asserted that the literature of no other country can boast of the preservation of such a long and uninterrupted series of memorials as that of England.' Thomas Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria; or Biography of Literary Characters of Great Britain and Ireland, arranged in Chronological Order: Anglo-Saxon Period* (London: John Parker, 1842), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. Further references in main body of the text.

Trench, George Marsh and Hensleigh Wedgwood.<sup>42</sup> Wright refers to the high regard in which Anglo-Saxon 'minstrels' were held, and their duty as tribal historians (3-7). His treatment of metre accepts most of Conybeare's analysis. He adds that; 'the only approach to a metrical system yet discovered is that two risings and two fallings of the voice seem necessary to each perfect line' (7). While not strictly accurate, this is an early articulation of the fact that the Anglo-Saxon line typically varies cadence from the first verse to the second (and so is unlike conventional accentual-syllabic metre). Wright notes the increasing tendency among German scholars to print the 'alliterative couplets' together on the same line, and defines the chief characteristics of the poetry as 'an endless variety of epithet and metaphor' (unlike earlier commentators, he does not see this as a defect) and a paucity of similes (8-12). His taste is for narrative poems: *Beowulf*, the Cædmonian paraphrases and *Judith*; it does not extend to the 'miscellaneous poems' of *The Exeter Book* (26-8).

### Amateur Philology

It is worth pointing out that in Britain, there is hardly a professional class of philologists or Anglo-Saxon scholars at this stage of the subject's history. Interested amateurs (often the clergy) contribute much to the emergent discipline, and creative and critical roles frequently intersect. William Barnes is a case in point, writing voluminous prose on language in the nativist vein throughout his career as poet and pastor. Indeed, Anglo-Saxonism seems to have inhabited all aspects of Barnes's life. His first sermon was

<sup>42</sup> See Richard Chenevix, Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 26th edn (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1851, 1899), pp. x, 5-6, 43, 46-8, 64-6, 118-9, 202 & 242n.; George, P. Marsh, *Lectures on the English Language*, 2nd edn (London: Samson Low, 1859, 1860), pp. 74-5 & 106; Hensleigh Wedgwood, *On the Origin of Language* (London: Trübner, 1866), pp. 6, 58, 104, 108 & 150. The popularity of this myth of the primitive linguistic golden age (which probably features in most cultures), may owe something to John Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, which uses Anglo-Saxon etymology in its argument that all language was once concrete and that abstract words are the result of linguistic corruption. John Horne Tooke, *The Diversions of Purley*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: the author, 1798-1805).

delivered in 1847 at Whitecombe Church near Dorchester, where 'the shaft of a Saxon Cross recalls that King Athelstan gave it [the church] to the monks of Milton Abbey'.<sup>43</sup> His article 'Compounds in the English Language', published in 1832 in *The Gentleman's Magazine*,<sup>44</sup> is an early example of his philological writing, and also serves to illustrate a strand of nativist opinion which was gaining ground at this time:

I wish Dr. Bosworth every success with his Anglo-Saxon Grammar. A more common cultivation of the gothic tongues would tend, I think, to check the growing corruption of our own; by showing how it may be enriched from itself, and therefore how little need we have of borrowing from Latin and Greek.<sup>45</sup>

That English is sliding into increasing decadence and corruption becomes a rallying point for Victorian philologists and feeds into the poetic of several poets, including Hopkins (an admirer of Barnes) and Pound (educated in the nineteenth-century philological tradition and himself briefly a lecturer in romance philology). Barnes goes on to argue that English is not wanting in a capacity for forming new words by compounding pure, native morphemes. Suffixes like '-lorn' and '-rich' can give rise to 'waylorn', 'mastlorn', 'shiprich', or 'wordrich', and English particles can form compounds just as satisfactory as their analogous Latin and Greek counterparts, e.g. 'upshut' for 'conclusion' (Dugdale, pp. 268-70). The note of defensive patriotism in this argument swells to crescendo in the concluding paragraph:

The English are a great nation; and as an Englishman, I am sorry that we have not a language of our own; but that whenever we happen to conceive a thought above that of a plough-boy, or produce anything beyond a pitch-fork, we are obliged to borrow a word from others before we can utter it, or give it a name; and to conclude, as the English language is most rich in literature of every kind, our writers should aim to purify and fix it, for, if they go on corrupting it, their own writings, after some time, will not be read without a glossary, perhaps not at all.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Giles Dugdale, *William Barnes of Dorset* (London: Cassell, 1953), p. 122.

<sup>44</sup> Reprinted in Dugdale, *William Barnes*, pp. 267-75.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267. In 1823 Joseph Bosworth had published *The Elements of Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, revising it for publication in 1826 as *A Compendious Grammar of the Primitive English or Anglo-Saxon Language*. In various revised forms Bosworth's *Grammar* was reprinted throughout the century.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5.

Ironically, Barnes's poems are frequently accompanied by a glossary, and today, other poets with nativist tendencies (Hopkins and Morris) also require occasional glossing to render their work more transparent. Yet the view that pure words are superior to those borrowed from foreign languages was not marginal or eccentric, but nineteenth-century orthodoxy. Nor was it simply the result of anti-French imperialism (although the political and military ascendancy of the British Empire created a need for the English to see themselves also as the cultural super-power of the world). On the other side of the Atlantic, identical ideas were soon being expressed. In 1859, the famous American naturalist George Perkins Marsh<sup>47</sup> (again, an amateur at philology), wrote:

Our present power of derivation and composition is much restricted, and while many other living languages can change all nouns, substantive and adjective, into each other, or into verbs, and vice-versâ, still retaining the root-form, which makes the new-coined word at once understood by every native ear, we, on the contrary, are constantly obliged to resort to compounds of foreign and to us unmeaning roots, whenever we wish to express a complex idea by a single word. The German and other cognate languages still retain this command over their hereditary resources, and in point of ready intelligibility and picturesqueness of expression, they have thus an important advantage over languages which, like the Latin and its derivatives, possess less plastic power. There are, in all the Gothic tongues, numerous compounds, of very obvious etymology, which are most eminently expressive, considered as a part of what may be called the nature-speech of man, as contrasted with that which is more appropriately the dialect of literature and art, and thus those languages are very rich, just where, as I remarked in a former lecture, our own is growing poor. The vocabulary belonging to the affections, the terms descriptive of the spontaneous action of the intellectual and moral faculties, the pictorial words which bring the material creation vividly before us, these in the languages in question are all more numerous, more forcible than the Latin terms by which we have too often supplied their places.<sup>48</sup>

### Barnes's Poetry

Given Barnes's commitment to Anglo-Saxon in his voluminous prose writings on language, it is surprising that his knowledge of the subject does not penetrate his poetry

<sup>47</sup> See Andrew Goudie, 'El Niño's trail through time', *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 6 March 1998, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> Marsh, *Lectures on the English Language*, p. 200. Similar views are expressed on pages 173-4, and on pages 201-4 he considers the potentialities of the particles *wan-*, *be-*, *for-* and *un-* in English word formation.

more than it does.<sup>49</sup> A reader of his poems would be hard put to find a word from a romance language that had been naturalized later than the Norman period, but this is merely part of the homeliness and plain-speaking of his poems and owes more to Wordsworth's 'language of real men', 'a plainer and more emphatic language',<sup>50</sup> than it does to a notion of linguistic purity: Barnes does not reactivate 'dead' words from Anglo-Saxon etymological roots in his poems. Nor does he imitate Anglo-Saxon verse forms, despite the understanding that his *Philological Grammar* exhibits. Lines of four, stressed syllables are extremely common in his verse, but this is due to his interest in the folk-ballad tradition, and syllables are always counted into regular patterns of trochaic, iambic, dactylic or anapaestic tetrameter in these four-stressed ballads.<sup>51</sup> The fact that these balladic forms were regarded as preserving older, pre-pentameter traditions which may stretch back to Anglo-Saxon verse is irrelevant: Barnes is not by-passing the late development of this folk-tradition to get at its Teutonic roots (as we might expect him to). Moreover, his nonce-verse in the *Philological Grammar* shows that, in keeping with British opinion in the first half of the century, Barnes considered the structure of Anglo-Saxon verse to consist, not of long lines of four-stresses bound over the caesura by 'tongue-rhyme', but couplets of verses of two stressed syllables each, and such a form is not found in his poems. Alliteration is sometimes used as a decorative, rather than

<sup>49</sup> See also William Barnes, *A Philological Grammar* (London: John Russell Smith, 1854), which includes a relatively accurate treatise on 'old Teutonic poetry', in which alliteration is described with native terminology as 'tongue-rhyme' or 'clipping-rhyme'. Barnes gives a modern English approximation of the structure in nonce-verse (printed in half-lines), presumably of his own composition (there is no reference for them), and he traces this old Teutonic clipping rhyme through *Piers Plowman* to sixteenth-century verse (pp. 289-91). Also William Barnes, *Se Gefylsta (The Helper): An Anglo-Saxon Delectus* (London: John Russell Smith, 1859), which he intends to be 'a first class-book of the language' for school-children, as 'Anglo-Saxon (English) has not been cultivated into a better form, but has been corrupted for the worse, since King Alfred's days' (p. iv). His method reaches its extreme in his late works *An Outline of English Speech-Craft* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878) and *An Outline of Rede-Craft (Logic) with English Wording* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1880), which he writes in 'Teutonic English, and not the English of our days' (*Rede-Craft*, pp. v-vi). In this Saxonised English 'fore-says' replace prefaces; 'word-headings', prepositions; 'one-sounded thing-words', monosyllabic nouns; and 'overthwartings', opposites.

<sup>50</sup> See William Wordsworth, ed. by Gill, pp. 595 & 597.



functional device,<sup>52</sup> but Barnes understood letter-rhyme to have been important in mediaeval Northern European poetry in general (including Middle English and early Celtic verse)<sup>53</sup> and it is not possible to discern a direct influence from Anglo-Saxon.<sup>54</sup>

The sole trace which Barnes's knowledge of Anglo-Saxon seems to have left in his poetry is his predilection for forging new compounds from native roots. Formed by analogy with Anglo-Saxon, the suffix '-some', meaning 'apt to (be)', (c.f. A-S. *langsum*, 'tedious', or *wynsum*, 'pleasant') becomes highly productive in Barnes's verse.<sup>55</sup> Barnes is also fond of making compounds from phrasal verbs (as he advocates in his article for *The Gentleman's Magazine*), by placing the particle before the main verb. This tactic is show-cased in 'Clouds [II]', in which the clouds are 'onriding slow', 'upreaching high', 'outreaching wide' and 'outshining white' due to the 'dust upblown'.<sup>56</sup> At the head of the compound, the particles are forced to carry a greater degree of emphasis than they normally would, and as stress is typically laid on the most meaningful words of an

<sup>51</sup> See for example, the iambic tetrameters of 'The Spring', 'When wintry weather's all a-done, / An' brooks do sparkle in the zun, / An' naísy-buildèn rooks do vlee / Wi' sticks toward their elem tree,' *The Poems of William Barnes*, ed. by Valerie Shepherd (Nottingham: Trent, 1998), p. 125.

<sup>52</sup> See for example his highly romanticized poem 'Moonlight', quite untypical of Anglo-Saxon verse; *The Poems of William Barnes*, ed. by Bernard Jones, 2 vols (London: Centaur, 1962), pp. 659-60.

<sup>53</sup> Barnes, *A Philological Grammar*, pp. 289-91.

<sup>54</sup> The importance of William Barnes as a poet might be questioned. Christopher Ricks would presumably hold him to be quite important. He gives Barnes eighteen pages of his anthology of Victorian poetry (compared to two pages in Daniel Karlin's comparable anthology); more than Swinburne, Morris, Arnold, Dante Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The high regard in which Barnes was held by Hopkins and Hardy (themselves influential poets), suggests that he is important at least in forming tastes, even if one does not attach great importance to his body of work. See *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, ed. by Christopher Ricks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) and *The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse*, ed. by Daniel Karlin (London: Penguin, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> See his remarks in *Rede-Craft*, pp. vi-vii. The poem 'Thissledown' moralises 'There's pleasure in a worksome life, / An' sloth is tiresome wi' its rest' (note the etymological precision of 'tiresome' as apt to tire physically, rather than the more usual sense of being annoying or tedious), *Poems of William Barnes*, ed. by Shepherd, p. 67. 'Darksome' is a favourite Barnes word, appearing in 'Leädy-Day An' Riddèn House' (pp. 63-4), 'The Lilac', (pp. 92-3) and 'Home from a journey' (pp. 114-4).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81. 'Clouds [II]' is Barnes's own translation into 'National English' of his dialect poem 'Clouds [I]'. In the dialect version all the particles are expressed by the unstressed vowel 'schwa', and are compounded less forcibly with a hyphen; 'a-ridèn', 'a-reachèn', 'a-blown' and 'a-comèn bright' (p. 80). The dialect compounds are probably accurate reflections of contemporary west country forms, while the 'National English' compounds are more radical, being re-inventions, or re-imaginings, of Anglo-Saxon compounds.



English sentence, Barnes effectively reactivates the latent semantic content of these frequently-overlooked parts of speech. Substantive compounds formed from two nominal elements are also common to both Anglo-Saxon and Barnes's poetry, but Barnes rarely exploits the full metaphorical possibilities found in the kennings of Anglo-Saxon.<sup>57</sup> This reduction of several separate words or parts of speech into single compounds turns back the clock of linguistic change to a time when English was a synthetic, not an analytical language. It allows for a greater compression of syntax, a point which is elaborated in the next chapter, for all these devices are found, in a more extreme form, in Hopkins's linguistic tool-kit.

### Longfellow

About the same time as Barnes is beginning to publish his philological speculations, on the other side of the Atlantic another poet with an affection for folk and oral traditions, Henry Longfellow, was also contributing to the growing literature on Anglo-Saxon letters. An amateur polyglot whose enthusiasm for mediaeval European literature had been nourished by three years of travelling around Europe, in 1836 Longfellow was appointed as the Smith Professor at Harvard and he lectured there until 1854 on a variety of mediaeval and modern literatures, including Anglo-Saxon.<sup>58</sup> Two years after his appointment, and perhaps as a result of having acquired the necessary books to profess the subject to his students, Longfellow published an article called 'Anglo-Saxon Literature' in *The North American Review*.<sup>59</sup> Ostensibly a review of a number of

<sup>57</sup> E.g. 'moonshades' in 'The Old Oak' (*Poems of William Barnes*, ed. by Shepherd, p. 68), 'brook-brim' in 'Brown Bennets' (p. 85) and 'mindsight' in 'To a Motherless Child' (pp. 126-7); the latter is an effective metaphor for 'imagination'.

<sup>58</sup> Newton Arvin, *Longfellow, his Life and Work*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), pp. 46-59.

<sup>59</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'Anglo-Saxon Literature' in *The North American Review*, 47 (Boston, 1838), 90-134.

(relatively) recent publications,<sup>60</sup> the article is in fact a comprehensive introduction to Anglo-Saxon literature for Longfellow's American readership. Longfellow's enthusiasm is evident, but it is coloured by a sentimental taste for the gothic and picturesque, typical for its time:

We would fain hope, that the beauty of this [Cardale's *Alfred*] and other Anglo-Saxon books may lead many to the study of that excellent language. Through such gate-ways will they pass, it is true, into no gay palace of song; but among the dark chambers and mouldering walls of an old national literature, all weather-stained and in ruins.<sup>61</sup>

Although slight on details of poetic form (probably out of consideration for his general readership), Longfellow includes several extracts of poems in translation, some of which are his own, such as the passage in which Beowulf and his men first cross the ocean to visit Hrothgar (pp. 104-6). Longfellow's views are orthodox and accord with Conybeare and Thorpe: he follows the convention of treating each verse as a complete line and he characterises the poetry as consisting of 'short, exclamatory lines', 'frequent inversions', 'bold transitions' and 'abundant metaphors'.<sup>62</sup> His unbridled admiration for *The Battle of Brunanburh* is more unusual; it was to be shared with another poet with public ambitions, Tennyson.<sup>63</sup>

Despite Longfellow's semi-professional interest in Anglo-Saxon, he does not engage seriously with the literature in his own poems. It remains part of his romantic infatuation

<sup>60</sup> Conybeare's *Illustrations* (1826), Cardale's *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius*, "*De Consolatione Philosophiae*" (1829), Thorpe's *Analecta Anglo-Saxonica* (1834), Kemble's *Beowulf* (1835-7) and Bosworth's *Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language* (1837).

<sup>61</sup> Longfellow, 'Anglo-Saxon Literature', p. 91.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>63</sup> 'Indeed, the whole ode is striking, bold, graphic. The furious onslaught; the cleaving of the wall of shields; the hewing down of banners; the din of the fight; the hard hand-play; the retreat of the Northmen, in nailed ships, over the stormy sea; and the deserted dead, on the battle-ground, left to the swart raven, the war-hawk, and the wolf; - all these images appeal strongly to the imagination. The bard has nobly described this victory of the illustrious war-smiths (*wlance wig-smithas*), the most signal victory since the coming of the Saxons into England; so say the books of the old wise men. We will copy this ode entire.' Longfellow, 'Anglo-Saxon Literature', p. 116. Apropos the Anglo-Saxon connection with Tennyson, Longfellow dedicated a sonnet to him entitled 'Wapentake' (from Anglo-Saxon *wæpentec*), but the imagery of jousting on horse-back has more to do with the High Middle Ages than the Anglo-Saxon term. See *The Poetical Works of Henry Longfellow* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 722-3.

with the idea of primitive culture: like the Finnish *Kalevala*, or Amerindian folk tales, Anglo-Saxon is just one note that can be sounded in a chord of generic tribalism:

I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,  
The cries of agony, the endless groan,  
Which, through the ages that have gone before us,  
In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,  
Through Cimbric forest roars the Norseman's song,  
And loud, amid the universal clamour,  
O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace  
Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,  
And Aztec priests upon their teocallis  
Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's skin;<sup>64</sup>

The heavy alliteration of 'On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer' may be felt appropriate to the subject, but Longfellow applies it equally to any noisy and exotic people from the past. The auditory volume of Anglo-Saxon poetry actually becomes a narrative device in his poem 'The Norman Baron', which also embodies a common solace of the Norman yoke theory, that the Norman aristocracy may have won a political victory, but they did not defeat the English language. As the former tyrant lies dying in his castle tower on Christmas Eve, the sound of his serfs below carries up to trouble his conscience:

And so loud these Saxon gleemen  
Sang to slaves the songs of freemen,  
That the storm was heard but faintly,  
Knocking at the castle-gates.

Till at length the lays they chanted  
Reached the chamber terror-haunted,  
Where the monk, the accents holy,  
Whispered at the baron's ear.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Third, fourth and fifth stanzas of 'The Arsenal at Springfield', *The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1823-1866*, ed. by Katharine Tynan (London: J. M. Dent, 1909), pp. 317-8.

<sup>65</sup> Stanzas six and seven, 'The Norman Baron', *The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1823-1866*, pp. 318-9.

Contrary to the practice of Barnes (and some of the poets yet to be considered), Longfellow makes little attempt to coin new compounds by analogy with Anglo-Saxon. When he does find a compound that appeals to his imagination, he writes a discursive poem that unpacks every nuance of the word so that its compressed, metaphorical suggestiveness becomes quite diffuse:

I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls  
The burial-ground God's-Acre! It is just;  
It consecrates each grave within its walls,  
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

God's-Acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts  
Comfort to those who in the grave have sown  
The seed that they had garnered in their hearts,  
Their bread of life, alas! no more their own.<sup>66</sup>

As a translator of Anglo-Saxon verse, Longfellow is disappointingly genteel: we are not treated to a modern version of the tub-thumping cacophony which he purports to hear in the original poetry. His version of 'Beowulf's Expedition to Heort' exhibits the typical, archaic mannerisms of much nineteenth-century verse, in part due to the fact that Longfellow's translation stays close to the original syntax, resulting in many inversions.<sup>67</sup> Similarly poetic mediaeval diction such as 'quoth', 'goodly', 'belies' and 'fain' anchors the verse firmly within the mainstream of its time. Of more interest is his translation of 'The Grave', if only for the fact that the poem is no longer considered to fall within the boundaries of Anglo-Saxon literature.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> First two stanzas of 'God's-Acre', *The Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1823-1866*, pp. 260-1. The 'ancient Saxon phrase' is presumably *metodwang*, literally Creator-field, and often taken to mean 'battlefield'.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. 'He bade him a sea-ship, / A goodly one, prepare. / Quoth he, the war-king, / Over the swan's road, / Seek he would / The mighty monarch', translating lines 198b-201a of the poem. For the whole extract, see Longfellow, *North American Review*, pp. 104-6 and *The Poetical Works of Henry Longfellow*, pp. 739-40.

<sup>68</sup> Although attaching the caveat that this is a 'Semi-' or 'Norman-Saxon' poem, both Conybeare and Thorpe include a full text of the poem in their collections of 'Anglo-Saxon' poetry; Longfellow simply notes that his translation is 'from the Anglo-Saxon'. More recently, Edwin Morgan has offered a version, 'From the early Middle English: The Grave', first published in 1952 in *Dies Irae*, reprinted in Edwin Morgan, *Collected Poems 1949-1987* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990), pp. 39-40. Longfellow also translated the *Exeter Book* poem known as *Soul and Body II* (his title is 'The Soul's Complaint Against the

For thee was a house built  
 Ere thou wast born,  
 For thee was a mould meant  
 Ere thou of mother camest.  
 But it is not made ready,  
 Not is its depth measured,  
 Nor is it seen  
 How long it shall be.  
 Now I bring thee  
 Where thou shalt be;  
 Now I shall measure thee,  
 And the mould afterwards.

Thy house is not  
 Highly timbered,  
 It is unhigh and low;  
 When thou art therein,  
 The heel-ways are low,  
 The side-ways unhigh.  
 The roof is built  
 Thy breast full nigh,  
 So thou shalt in mould  
 Dwell full cold,  
 Dimly and dark.<sup>69</sup>

Here, the archaic verb inflections and second person pronouns do not distract from the poem's effect. Reminiscent of the language of the King James Authorised Version of the Bible in both diction and solemnity, the short ('half') lines emphasize the anaphoric structure of the phrases and echo the parallelism of much of the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament. This similarity between Hebrew parallelism and Anglo-Saxon variation, first noticed in Conybeare's *Illustrations*, was later to become a critical commonplace.<sup>70</sup> In Longfellow's poem the registers of mock-Saxon and the A. V. collide with satisfactory results: the sense in which the poem's language is freed from a contemporary moment suits the timelessness of death's inevitability.

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Body', *Poetical Works*, p. 740. Title and text he found in Conybeare's *Illustrations*, pp. 232-5). This now seems an idiosyncratically uncanonical choice: he calls it 'a very singular and striking poem' (*North American Review*, p. 122), although few scholars would agree: Bradley wrote of it; 'didactic verse evidently did not have to be fine poetry to gain admission into the Exeter Book; *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* ed. and trans. by S. A. J. Bradley (London: Dent, 1982), p. 359.

<sup>69</sup> First two stanzas of 'The Grave', Longfellow, *Poetical Works*, p. 40.

### Tennyson's 'Brunanburh'

Longfellow's shared enthusiasm with Tennyson for *The Battle of Brunanburh* has been noted. Edward Irving suggests that Tennyson 'might very well have read' the review in which Longfellow praises *Brunanburh*, since 'he [Tennyson] had considerable correspondence with the author of it'.<sup>71</sup> While this is possible, Tennyson published his own translation of the poem in 1880, more than forty years after Longfellow's article, and it is unlikely that he began work on it before 1876, when his son published a prose translation of *Brunanburh* in the *Contemporary Review*.<sup>72</sup> Tennyson's first contact with Anglo-Saxon poetry had occurred much earlier however, when he was a student at Cambridge. In 1830, his close friend, John Mitchell Kemble, a fellow undergraduate, decided against ordination in the Anglican Church, and instead dedicated himself to Anglo-Saxon literary scholarship, as a result of which Tennyson writes an approving sonnet 'To J.M.K.'. <sup>73</sup> Around the same time Tennyson translated ten, 'half-line' verses of *Beowulf* (lines 258-62), which remained unpublished in his notebook,<sup>74</sup> and Irving demonstrates, from the correspondence between Tennyson, Kemble and their friend Arthur Hallam in 1832-33 that Tennyson was aware and supportive of Kemble's work on the first English edition of *Beowulf*.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Conybeare, *Illustrations*, p. xxix.

<sup>71</sup> Edward B. Irving, Jr., 'The charge of the Saxon brigade: Tennyson's *Battle of Brunanburh*', in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxon from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Donald Scragg and Carole Weinberg, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 174-93 (p. 179).

<sup>72</sup> Michael Alexander 'Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh"', *The Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 4 (1985), 151-61, p. 151. Alexander thinks it likely that Tennyson commissioned his son to make the prose translation and Ricks, in his note to Tennyson's translation, quotes Tennyson as saying that 'I have more or less availed myself of my son's prose translation'. *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1969, 1987), III, 18-23.

<sup>73</sup> Clare A. Simmons, ' "Iron-Worded Proof": Victorian Identity and the Old English Language', *Studies in Medievalism*, 4 (1992), 202-18 (p. 202). Ricks, *The Poems of Tennyson*, I, 280-1.

<sup>74</sup> Alexander prints them in his notes, although records the lines of *Beowulf* as 258-63 (not 258-62), 'Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh"', p. 161.

<sup>75</sup> Irving, 'The charge of the Saxon brigade', pp. 176-7.



From the early 1830s to the late 1870s is a long period of poetic gestation, but Tennyson was deeply committed to accentual-syllabic prosody and may have felt so at home with it that he had little need to experiment with a form which was not well understood in the early part of the century, and which, to some literary historians, seemed practically formless. When he did come to translate an Anglo-Saxon poem (his interest rekindled by work on the play *Harold*, which mentions *Brunanburh* twice),<sup>76</sup> he relied on accentual-syllabic prosody to approximate the effects of the original as he understood them. His mainly dactylic measure with trochaic substitution is faithful to little except the predominantly falling rhythms of Anglo-Saxon, but it is the kind of noisy war-song which Longfellow claimed to find.<sup>77</sup> It is easy to see why *Brunanburh*, little studied today, should have been so attractive to Tennyson, the proud laureate of a Britain at the height of her imperial power, as Alexander says: 'Tennyson felt a patriotic continuity with the triumph of Brunanburh which is less widely available today.'<sup>78</sup>

Alexander's and Irving's analyses of the translation are fairly exhaustive, but nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon scholarship is illuminating on one curious point. Noting that Tennyson has re-organised the poem into fifteen irregular strophes (*Deor* is the only surviving truly strophic poem, although *Wulf and Eadwacer* does have a refrain; the remainder are in a mediaeval kind of blank verse), Alexander makes the aside that Tennyson's version is 'almost like an ode' (157). The chance observation of this likeness identifies something Tennyson undoubtedly intended. In the prefatory dissertation to his *History of English Poetry* (revised and reprinted in 1824), 'On the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe', Thomas Warton called the poem 'the Saxon Ode on the Victory of

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

Athelstan'.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Conybeare, classifying Anglo-Saxon poetry into several genres, entitles his fifth category 'odes and epitaphs', the primary example of which is the 'Ode on the Victories of Edmund Ætheling'.<sup>80</sup> Tennyson received the poem as an example of an early English ode; 'our' version of Pindar. Equally plausible is that Tennyson believed Anglo-Saxon poetry to have been strophic in its pure or original state. Irving notes that 'Henry Morley in the second edition of his *English Writers* mentions German theorists like Karl Müllenhof who had proposed in 1861 an original strophic form for Germanic verse; Tennyson might have heard of this hypothesis, now discarded.'<sup>81</sup> In fact, the idea that Anglo-Saxon verse had once been stanzaic was common.<sup>82</sup> *Beowulf* is often said to be composed in 'fits', or even 'cantos'.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Turner's translation of *Brunanburh* is divided into three large sections by line-breaks, and thirteen, smaller sections, which might be thought to constitute stanzas, by indentation (these do not coincide exactly with sentences),<sup>84</sup> and several of Conybeare's own translations are printed in stanzas, including *Widsith* ('The Song of the Traveller'), a favourite piece of evidence for the proponents of

<sup>77</sup> For a thorough analysis of the rhythm of Tennyson's translation, see Alexander, 'Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh"', pp. 155-8. Both Alexander and Irving are detailed in their contextualization of Tennyson's view of the poem as a 'primitive war-song' (Irving, 'The charge of the Saxon brigade', p. 183).

<sup>78</sup> Alexander, 'Tennyson's "Battle of Brunanburh"', p. 159.

<sup>79</sup> Warton, *History of English Poetry*, rev. by Price (1824), pp. xxxix & lxxxvii. Warton also gives a parallel text on the poem (Anglo-Saxon half-lines facing English translation), with extensive notes on pp. lxxxvi-cii.

<sup>80</sup> Conybeare, *Illustrations*, p. lxxviii.

<sup>81</sup> Irving, 'The charge of the Saxon brigade', p. 185. For an account of the theory (which Morley finds dubious), see Morley, *English Writers: An attempt towards a History of English Literature*, 2nd edn, II, 26-8.

<sup>82</sup> As late as 1871, in an extensively revised edition of Warton's *History of English Poetry*, Henry Sweet wrote: 'it is probable that the earliest poetry of the Anglo-Saxons consisted of single strophes, each narrating, or rather alluding to, some exploit of a hero or god, or expressing some single sentiment, generally of a proverbial or gnomic character. Such is the poetry of savage nations. The next stage is to abandon these strophes into connected groups. The third is to abandon the strophic arrangement altogether.' Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, 4 vols, rev. by W. Carew Hazlitt, with notes and new additions by Skeat, Furnivall and others (London: Reeves and Turner, 1774-81, 1871), II, 28.

<sup>83</sup> Sharon Turner notes its 'forty-two sections' in *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), IV, 408. Conybeare's extracts are divided into 'cantos' (a term Longfellow adopts) in *Illustrations*, pp. 30-167.

<sup>84</sup> Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807), II, 289-91.

the strophic theorists.<sup>85</sup> Arguably it would have been stranger for Tennyson not to have put his translation into stanzas.

### Morris

One other widely-respected poet was to publish some Saxonist work before the close of the century, William Morris.<sup>86</sup> Morris's translation of *Beowulf*, published in 1895 in collaboration with the scholar A. J. Wyatt,<sup>87</sup> now has few admirers,<sup>88</sup> although it was once held to be 'an entire success'<sup>89</sup> and the best translation of the poem in an imitative measure.<sup>90</sup> Late in the century as it was, Morris's translation was still the first attempted by a major poet. Indeed, the want of a version of the poem easily accessible to a wider readership seemed to have motivated Morris, for he had once pronounced *Beowulf* 'worthy of a great people',<sup>91</sup> but complained to Wyatt that; 'no one can appreciate [the poem] in the present versions.'<sup>92</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Conybeare, pp. 22-7 and Morley, *English Writers*, p. 27, where he cites Karl Müllenhoff as founding the theory using *Widsith* in 1844.

<sup>86</sup> Some of the material in the following account of William Morris's *Beowulf*, is dealt with in greater detail in my 'The Reception of Morris's *Beowulf*', a chapter forthcoming in *News from Sometime: William Morris in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by David Latham (University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Reprinted as 'The Tale of Beowulf' in *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans, 1910-15), X, 179-274. Wyatt had recently been working on his edition of the poem, *Beowulf*, ed. by A. J. Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894).

<sup>88</sup> See Paul Thompson, *The Work of William Morris*, (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 163; Jack Lindsay, *William Morris: His Life and Work* (London: Constable, 1975), p. 365; and Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber, 1994), p. 649. The earliest criticism of the translation I can find was made by A. Blyth Webster, although Webster is more sympathetic to Morris's aims than later critics; Webster, A. Blyth, 'Translation from Old into Modern English: A Note and an Experiment', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 5 (1914), 153-71.

<sup>89</sup> By Theodore Watt, see *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Peter Faulkner (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 385-7 (p. 385).

<sup>90</sup> Chauncey Tinker, *The Translations of Beowulf: A Critical Bibliography*, Yale Studies in English, vol. 16 (New York: Holt, 1903), p. 109.

<sup>91</sup> In his lecture, 'Early England', delivered to the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League in 1886 and reprinted in *The unpublished lectures of William Morris*, ed. by Eugene Lemire (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), pp. 158-78 (p. 163). See also his lecture 'The Gothic Revival I', pp. 54-73 (p. 57).

<sup>92</sup> *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, 5 vols, ed. by Norman Kelvin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-1996), III, 436.

Morris's translation epitomizes the nativist approach to diction. Wherever possible he translates an Anglo-Saxon word with a virtually identical modern English homophone, for example, A-S *mod* ('heart' or 'spirit') he renders with the modern word 'mood'.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, he chooses to translate *eam* not as 'uncle', but as 'eme'; *herian* not as 'praise', but as 'hery'; *leode* not as 'people', but 'leeds'; and even *seax*, not as 'knife', but as 'sax'.<sup>94</sup> This produces an extreme tension at the heart of Morris' *Beowulf*. On the one hand it is written partly in fulfilment of the desire for a pure and poetically forceful Saxonised diction: part of the project to reinvent a language undiluted by the passage of time. Pulling against this is Morris' other purpose: to popularise the earliest national epic with a suitable verse translation which respects the original poem, yet is still readable. This tension may not have seemed so great in the late nineteenth century when it seemed likely that some knowledge of Anglo-Saxon would soon become part of the education of the literate classes. The question of what part Anglo-Saxon should play in school and university education was much debated. We have already seen that Thomas Jefferson intended it to be at the core of the American curriculum (see footnote five), and that William Barnes hoped that the language might be taught to schoolchildren. George Marsh advocated the teaching of Anglo-Saxon over and above Latin and Greek. James Murray did teach Anglo-Saxon to his school pupils at Hawick Academy.<sup>95</sup> Throughout the latter years of the century, establishment figures at Oxford University feared that the new English School, with its compulsory Old English component, would come to replace

<sup>93</sup> See for example, 'The Tale of Beowulf', p. 190, where Morris translates *modþræce* (line 385) as 'mood-daring'.

<sup>94</sup> Of the fight between Beowulf and Grendel's mother, Morris writes (line 1545 of the original); 'Then she sat on the hall-guest and tugg'd out her sax', 'The Tale of Beowulf', p. 225. The line is also cited by Michael Alexander in 'Alexander Berry and the Berry Chair of English Literature', in *Launch-Site for English Studies: Three Centuries of Literary Studies at the University of St. Andrews*, ed. by Robert Crawford (St. Andrews: Verse, 1997), pp. 131-47 (p. 146), and 'The Sheen on the Mere, or Beowulf in Ulster', review of *Beowulf: A New Translation*, by Seamus Heaney, *Agenda*, vol. 37, no. 4 (2000), 80-83.

<sup>95</sup> K. M. Elisabeth Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words: James A. H. Murray and the 'Oxford English Dictionary'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 54.

the study of the Classics.<sup>96</sup> Morris might have felt that the poetry-reading public were going to become more familiar with the linguistic resources he uses in 'The Tale of Beowulf' as this trend continued (rather as Milton could count on his audience, schooled in the classics, being able to appreciate his puns on Latinate English).

Tolkien's critique of translating old words by their modern cognates, a tactic guided by what he has termed 'the etymological fallacy',<sup>97</sup> has put an end to the excesses of this method of translation: yet it did not seem at all misguided or grotesque to the Victorian philologists whose writings form the background for Morris's Saxonist work. Moreover, not all aspects of Morris's translation are as risible as those words quoted above. There are times when he strikes on a particularly powerful or memorable expression following the same method.<sup>98</sup> These partial successes, and the prevailing philological climate no doubt account for the great respect Morris's translation commanded in the years immediately after its publication. Consequently, it remained a potent model for at least a generation after Morris's death, as we shall see in the chapter on Pound.

I hope to have established that a number of notable nineteenth-century poets show considerable interest in the emerging body of Anglo-Saxon poetry, even if assimilation of the work was problematic. Meanwhile, unbeknown to all but a few private correspondents, another poet had been chewing the cud of philology, and had also turned it into melodious song with rather more effect. His song would not be heard by many until after his death, when, in 1918, his friend Robert Bridges published most of his surviving poems in book form for the first time. In an anti-chronological move,

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<sup>96</sup> D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of the School of English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 77, 83, 87 & 92.

Hopkins's work will be considered in detail in the next chapter, against the background of the less ruminative cud-chewers of the nineteenth century, with whom the present chapter has briefly dealt.

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<sup>97</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, 'On Translating Beowulf', in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins, 1983, 1997), pp. 49–71 (p. 56).

<sup>98</sup> I explore these in more detail in my forthcoming publication. See note 86.



## Hopkins: 'The Sole Civilized Fruit' of a 'Brain-Starved Plodding'?

Hopkins's marked predilection for words of an Anglo-Saxon pedigree, his idiosyncratic syntax, relish for forming new compounds, habitual use of alliteration, and his much-discussed 'sprung rhythm', all contribute to the general impression that his style owes a great debt to early English poetry. It is a popular view among non-specialist readers of his verse, and endures with some academics. When, for example, in the preface to *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge wish to commend the study of Anglo-Saxon literature to possibly reluctant undergraduates, they place the appealing Gerard Hopkins at the head of their 'list of modern poets who have been influenced by Old English literature'.<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom gives a false impression when he writes that Hopkins's 'essential metrical achievement was to revive the schemes of Old English poetry'.<sup>2</sup> Donald McChesney's vague aside that it is 'partly true' that 'Hopkins drew his alliterative patterns from Old English verse [...] because he loved Anglo-Saxon and Middle English' is the kind of comment which perpetuates this commonly-held opinion.<sup>3</sup> That Hopkins's poetry was influenced by Anglo-Saxon is only one of the hasty assumptions Marshall McLuhan makes when he complains that professors of the subject are unwilling to admit that Hopkins is 'the sole

<sup>1</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Victorian Prose and Poetry*, ed. by Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 681. Bloom qualifies this with the acknowledgement that 'Hopkins came to the study of Old English late' (in fact too late for that study to influence sprung rhythm). Bloom continues: 'Hopkins's archaizing return to Cynewulf and Langland, though influential for a time, now seems an honorable eccentricity'. This thesis proves otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Donald McChesney, 'The Meaning of Inscape', in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Casebook*, ed. by Margaret Bottrall (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 202-17 (p. 212). For other casual remarks assuming Hopkins's knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, see Donatella Abbate Badin, 'Uttering and Wording: Hopkins's Uneasy Relationship with the Written Word', in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Tradition and Innovation*, ed. by P. Bottalla, G. Marra and F. Marucci, (Ravenna: Longo, 1991), pp. 247-60 (p. 251) and Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody*, 2nd edn (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 5.

civilized fruit of their brain-starved plodding'.<sup>4</sup> Ignoring the injustice of McLuhan's gibe at Grein, Sievers, Ker, Tolkien and fellows, and the complications surrounding 'civilized' as a term for Anglo-Saxon literature and language during Hopkins's lifetime (examined in the last chapter), this thesis demonstrates that Hopkins is far from being the 'sole' poetic fruit of scholarly labour in Anglo-Saxon studies. Yet not even the term 'fruit' is strictly accurate: at least the sense in which Hopkins's poetry may be thought the result of Anglo-Saxon influence is more complicated than McLuhan and others assume, and needs careful qualification.

### So Far as Hopkins Knows...

In fact we have no information as to what (if any) Anglo-Saxon verse Hopkins read, and although there is evidence that he admired the language, Hopkins, by his own admission, did not begin to study Anglo-Saxon until late in 1882 ('The Wreck of the Deutschland', his first mature poem, was finished in 1876). Attempting to convince the sceptical Robert Bridges of the pedigree of sprung rhythm, Hopkins writes in a letter dated 18 October 1882:

So far as I know – I am enquiring and presently I shall be able to speak more decidedly – it existed in full force in Anglo saxon verse and in great beauty; in a degraded and doggerel shape in *Piers Ploughman* (I am reading that famous poem and coming to the conclusion that it is not worth reading).<sup>5</sup>

From this it is clear that by 1882 Hopkins had not read much, if any, Anglo-Saxon poetry in the original. A few weeks later he wrote: 'in fact I am learning Anglosaxon and it is a vastly superior thing to what we have now.'<sup>6</sup> Tantalisingly (and perhaps tellingly), that reference is the last he makes in any of the surviving correspondence to his study of

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Marshall McLuhan, 'The Analogical Mirrors', in *Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*, ed. by Cleanth Brooks (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1945), pp. 15-27 (p.16).

<sup>5</sup> *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. by Claude Collier Abbot, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 156.

<sup>6</sup> 26 November 1882. *Letters to Bridges*, p. 163.

Anglo-Saxon. We are left to guess at which texts he read, in which editions,<sup>7</sup> how long he continued his study, and indeed whether the poetry lived up to his high expectations.

His deep disappointment with *Piers Plowman* seems due to his hopes of finding a later, more accessible manifestation of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative, accentual measure. Two years previously he had written of Langland's poem as if it were in the same, single tradition of 'the older native poetry' and progenitor of the strong caesura in English verse.<sup>8</sup> This assertion is made before he had read either *Piers* or Anglo-Saxon for himself, but the identification of Anglo-Saxon metre with *Piers Plowman* was commonplace and he may have come across it in any number of sources. Percy, in his 'On the Metre of Pierce Plowman's Vision', remarks that:

The author of this poem [*Piers*] will not be found to have invented any new mode of versification, as some have supposed, but only to have retained that of the old Saxon and Gothic poets; which was probably never wholly laid aside.<sup>9</sup>

Percy advises that:

This deserves the attention of those, who were desirous to recover the laws of the ancient Saxon Poesy, usually given up as inexplicable: I am of the opinion that they will find what they seek in the Metre of Pierce Plowman.<sup>10</sup>

William Barnes finds 'the true clipping rhyme of Saxon verse' in the '*Vision of Piers Plowman*',<sup>11</sup> and Coventry Patmore, Hopkins's friend and correspondent, also treats the rhythm of *Piers Plowman* as a late example of the Anglo-Saxon measure in his 'Prefatory

<sup>7</sup> Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* was available, having been published in 1876. Like Hopkins, Sweet was an alumnus of Balliol and graduated only six years after Hopkins. They must have missed each other at college by two or three years, but, Sweet and his prodigious Anglo-Saxon scholarship may well have come to the attention of the philologically-minded Hopkins.

<sup>8</sup> 5 September 1880. *Letters to Bridges*, p. 108.

<sup>9</sup> *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. by Thomas Percy, 3rd edn, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), pp. 270-82 (p. 272).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270-82 (pp. 278-9).

<sup>11</sup> William Barnes, *A Philological Grammar* (London: John Russell Smith, 1854), p. 291.

Study on English Metrical Law'.<sup>12</sup> Hopkins's letter to Bridges of 26 January 1881 (before he had begun to read *Piers*) suggests he had read Patmore's essay by this date and his letter to Patmore of 7 November 1883 also implies acceptance of the metrical equivalence of *Piers* and Anglo-Saxon.<sup>13</sup> Being dissatisfied with what he found in *Piers Plowman* when he examined it for himself, Hopkins seems to have turned to Anglo-Saxon in search of the native English metre.

Whatever his reasons, it is clear that Hopkins did not read Anglo-Saxon until mid-way through his poetic career. All of the characteristic stylistic features which resemble some of those of early English poetry were already present (and in the case of sprung rhythm quite uncompromisingly so) in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', of 1876. This pre-dates his study of Anglo-Saxon by almost seven years, a chronology which proves that a first-hand knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and verse is not the source of Hopkins's alliterative patterns, nor of any feature of his style.

### Current Academic Consensus

Since the publication of Hopkins's letters in 1935, scholars have exercised considerable caution in treating the Saxonesque qualities of his verse. Gardner's encyclopaedic critical intelligence had to content itself with bringing Hopkins's 'new rhythm' into contiguity with Anglo-Saxon verse and detailing a number of compelling parallels between the two, but stops short of claiming a direct link.<sup>14</sup> Writing on the possible Anglo-Saxon

<sup>12</sup> Coventry Patmore, *Amelia and Other Poems: with a Prefatory Study on English Metrical Law* (London: George Bell, 1878), p.56.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, p. 19; and *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Claude Collier Abbot, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.332.

<sup>14</sup> See W.H. Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), II, 158-63. Here Gardner compares sprung rhythm with Sievers's 'five types'; likens Hopkins's alexandrines to the lines of *Genesis B*; and parallels his 'sprung syntax' with that of *The Wanderer*.

connection, William Quinn concedes that 'few modern critics are willing to interpret the poet's "interest" in Anglo-Saxon as a "debt" to it'.<sup>15</sup>

Since the publication of the letters, scholars have found the influence on Hopkins of Victorian philologists a more profitable subject.<sup>16</sup> It is demonstrable that Hopkins was well acquainted with much of the leading work in this new science of language; indeed in a botanising and fossil-hunting fashion he was one of their kind. Both Milroy and Plotkin write illuminatingly on the inspiration which Hopkins found in philology. Their books have significantly advanced understanding of some of the motives behind Hopkins's peculiar style, and have deepened readings of individual poems. This chapter takes their work as its starting point and builds on it.

It will be shown that Hopkins was familiar with a wide range of philological ideas and discoveries before 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' in 1876, and that he consequently had some indirect knowledge of Anglo-Saxon language and literature, through secondary sources, while his mature style was still in gestation.<sup>17</sup> It is improbable that Hopkins was ignorant of the many references to, and sometimes detailed accounts of, Anglo-Saxon poetry to be found in Victorian philologists (a few examples of which were touched on in the previous chapter). Milroy and Plotkin make several sidelong references to 'the Saxon connection': Plotkin has an appendix of that name, considering several books with accounts of Anglo-Saxon and to which Hopkins may have had access. Plotkin draws few

<sup>15</sup> William A. Quinn, 'Hopkins' Anglo-Saxon', *Hopkins Quarterly*, 8 (1981), 25-32 (p. 25).

<sup>16</sup> In particular, see James Milroy, *The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: André Deutsch, 1977) and Cary H. Plotkin, *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of the Poetic Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989). See also Giuseppe Gaetano Castorina, 'The Science of Language and the Distinctive Character of Hopkins's Poetry and Poetics', in *Tradition and Innovation*, pp. 83-100.

<sup>17</sup> William Quinn uses a methodology similar to my own, but considers only two possible sources of information about Anglo-Saxon poetry. Quinn, 'Hopkins' Anglo-Saxon', pp. 29-30.



conclusions from this, other than to contradict Walter Ong's opinion that knowledge of Anglo-Saxon was difficult to come by in Hopkins's time, but the material does testify to 'the diffusion of knowledge about Old English in nontechnical writings'.<sup>18</sup> However, Milroy's and Plotkins's principal field of interest is linguistics, not Anglo-Saxon; consequently the subject is ripe for re-investigation.

### The Present Argument and Methodology

Anglo-Saxon influence on Hopkins's poems can be re-considered in the light of his knowledge of contemporary philology. Nineteenth-century writers on language frequently quote brief passages from Anglo-Saxon poems in support of their arguments. These extracts (often 'specimens') are almost always given with a modern English translation, either in parallel columns of text, or in footnotes (unlike quotations in Latin, which readers are assumed to understand).<sup>19</sup> Some of the idiosyncrasies of Hopkins's style can be attributed therefore, not to a first-hand study of Anglo-Saxon language and literature, but to his second-hand knowledge of the subject, acquired before 1876. Furthermore, Hopkins's own personal inclination towards etymology means that his Anglo-Saxon influence derives primarily from language, not literature.<sup>20</sup> The linguistic climate in which Hopkins was educated held the individual word to be the thing most

<sup>18</sup> Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 153.

<sup>19</sup> Thus Wedgwood, who wishes to demonstrate that all abstract words derive from original sensory roots, gives the example 'bright', the root of which he claims to be 'a clear sound, outcry, tumult.' In support he writes: 'in AS. we have *beorhtian*, to resound, and *beoht*, bright. "Leod was asungen / Gleomannes gyd, / Gamen eft astah, / *Beorhtede* benc-sweg": The lay was sung, the gleeman's song, the sport grew high, the bench-notes resounded. - *Beowulf*, 2315.' Hensleigh Wedgwood, *On the Origin of Language* (London: Trübner, 1866), p. 104. As we shall see, Hopkins was in sympathy with many of Wedgwood's ideas and may have known his work, although the principle of quotation and translation from Anglo-Saxon poetry in support of philological arguments is universal in this period.

<sup>20</sup> For evidence of this interest, see the many etymological lists that Hopkins makes in his diaries between September 1863 and late 1864. *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Humphry House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 4-47. As an example: 'skill, originally I believe to divide, discriminate. From same word or root *shell* (in a school), *shilling* (division of a pound), and they say *school* (both of boys and whales), *shoal*, *scale* (of fish), *keel*, etc. *Skill* is of course connected with *scindere* and other words meaning to cut, divide - *σχίζειν* etc.' (p. 25).



worthy of attention. Emerson's claim that 'language is fossil poetry',<sup>21</sup> was taken up as a motto by many nineteenth-century philologists and frequently quoted with approval.<sup>22</sup> It is at the atomic level of the individual lexical unit that Hopkins (who was at Oxford during the heyday of Max Müller, the most influential of nineteenth-century philologists in Britain), was most interested. It is through this microscopy, rather than in prosody, that the contemporary understanding of Anglo-Saxon makes itself felt in Hopkins's poetry. To concentrate primarily on sprung rhythm, as many scholars have done previously in pursuing the Saxon connection, or to attempt to find echoes from specific Anglo-Saxon poems in Hopkins's work, is to look in the wrong places.<sup>23</sup>

It will be necessary first to recapitulate what it is that Hopkins knew about Anglo-Saxon, and what he may have known, from the various sources available to him. This will partly be a revisiting of others' findings (notably Gardner, Milroy and Plotkin), although different use will be made of some of this material: in particular more emphasis is placed on the importance of George Marsh. Detailed study will then be made of the smallest unit of composition, the word in Hopkins's poems; followed by the compounding of words (which implies syntactical relationship); and finally prosody and the line will be considered: the focus of study will widen as it progresses. The largest compositional element, the poem, is not considered separately, as Hopkins was not influenced by Anglo-Saxon thematically or in terms of narrative: indeed, given the nature of his acquaintance with the literature (at second-hand for so long), this is scarcely possible.

<sup>21</sup> First published in 1844. Reprinted in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Edward M. Emerson, 12 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 1905), III, 22.

<sup>22</sup> See for example Richard Chenevix Trench, *On the Study of Words*, 26th edn (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1851, 1899), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Stephenson has written on the similarity between the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon (as described by John Collins Pope) and Hopkins's sprung rhythm. His article is extremely attentive, but seems to demonstrate the natural tendency of the English language to form dipodic patterns, when not meeting the

### Sources of Hopkins's Knowledge

The sources of Hopkins's knowledge of English philology and of Anglo-Saxon fall into three groups: those works Hopkins definitely read or consulted; those which it is probable he knew; and works it is possible he had access to, but for which there is no documentary evidence. For the present purpose, chief among the publications Hopkins definitely used is George Marsh's *Lectures on the English Language*.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Marsh was an American philologist and, coincidentally, a natural scientist. In this respect he exemplifies the nineteenth-century philologist: language was itself a natural science, and the notion of evolution through adaptation to local circumstance (perhaps the most powerful idea the nineteenth century bequeathed to us) was used by Marsh, and others, to account for the diversity and development of language. His *Lectures* were first published in 1859, the same year as Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. That Hopkins knew these lectures, first delivered to postgraduate students at Columbia College, New York in the autumn and winter of 1858-1859, is beyond doubt: he refers to them twice in his notes for 'Rhythm and the other Structural Parts of Rhetoric – Verse',<sup>25</sup> lectures which he almost certainly delivered to Jesuit novices as Professor of Rhetoric at Manresa House, Roehampton, between 22 September 1873 and 31 July 1874.<sup>26</sup>

In the course of these notes Hopkins deals with alliteration, writing that it 'was an essential element in Anglo-Saxon or old English verse, as *Piers the Plowman*, also in Icelandic.' He goes on to consider the related device of 'skothending',<sup>27</sup> which he

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constraints of an accentual-syllabic system, rather than a more specific parallel. Edward A. Stephenson, 'Hopkins' "Sprung Rhythm" and the Rhythm of *Beowulf*, *Victorian Poetry*, 18 (1981), 97-116.

<sup>24</sup> George Perkins Marsh, *Lectures on the English Language*, 2nd edn (London: Samson Low, 1859, 1860).

<sup>25</sup> *Journals and Papers*, pp. 267-88.

<sup>26</sup> See Storey's preface in *Journals and Papers*, p. xxvii.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

describes as 'an opposite kind of alliteration' (the rhymes end in the same consonant cluster, but have different vowels) and parenthetically adds 'from Marsh, who calls it *half-rhyme*'. A few pages later he returns to these variations of rhyme, writing 'shothending' in error, and notes that there is 'a beautifully rich combination of them in Norse poetry' (Hopkins appears to have had no reading knowledge of this language). An example from Snorri, which Marsh had included in a footnote, is reproduced in Hopkins's lecture notes; the source unacknowledged.<sup>28</sup> Hopkins's notes continue by supplying the modern English nonce-stanza which Marsh had composed to illustrate these Norse poetic devices, accompanied by the words 'and of his own':

Softly now are sifting  
 Snows on landscape frozen.  
 Thickly fall the flakelets,  
 Feathery-light, together,  
 Shower of silver pouring,  
 Soundless all around us,  
 Field and river folding  
 Fair in mantle rarest.<sup>29</sup>

That the 'he' of 'his own' is indeed Marsh is confirmed a few lines later when Hopkins moves on to consider examples in non-Teutonic poetry, remarking that 'Marsh gives two beautiful specimens, a stanza of ottava rima from Pulci and a sonnet from a note in the works of Redi'. The casual nature in which Hopkins cites Marsh (never using his full name, or giving the book title) suggests that he was quite familiar with his work. The fact that Hopkins reproduces, word-perfectly, both a Norse and an imitative English stanza from Marsh further suggests that he had access to a copy of the *Lectures* at this time, or else had earlier copied the relevant passages into another notebook.

<sup>28</sup> From *Hattatal*. See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, trans. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Dent, 1987), pp. 199-200.

<sup>29</sup> *Journals and Papers*, p. 287 & Marsh, *Lectures*, pp. 553-7. My italics added to show the 'skothending'. 'Snows' and 'frozen', and 'Fair' and 'rarest', may also be intended as examples, but here the vowels are identical, and in true Norse 'skothending', they should be different (see *Edda*, pp. 166-7). Obviously several other sound-pattern devices are employed here by Marsh.

Attention has been drawn to a strong resemblance between Marsh's version of the Norse verse pattern and some phrases from 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', notably by Gardner and Plotkin.<sup>30</sup> Both critics infer that Marsh's comments on examples of alliterative patterns in old Teutonic poetry probably fed into the development of Hopkins's own line. However, few scholars seem to have examined Marsh's *Lectures* beyond the chapter 'Alliteration, Line-rhyme, and Assonance', from which these references come. It is unlikely that a poet so interested in the texture of language would not have read more of Marsh's book, given that he clearly found at least one chapter of such interest. The *Lectures*, as Austin Warren has remarked, is 'a book calculated to incite a poet'<sup>31</sup> and I believe Hopkins to have been so incited. It is notable that, Anglo-Saxon is extensively referred to throughout the *Lectures* and is used in support of almost every linguistic argument presented.

In the previous chapter we encountered some of William Barnes's eccentric linguistic handbooks, encouraging the resuscitation of Anglo-Saxon features of English. Hopkins had long been an admirer of Barnes's Dorsetshire-dialect poems, a taste he shared with Coventry Patmore and had occasion to defend against Bridges.<sup>32</sup> We know that Hopkins had read the *Outline of English Speech-Craft*, by 26 November 1882, for he mentions it in a letter to Bridges of that date: although the fact that he incorrectly gives the title as 'Speech craft of English Speech' suggests that Hopkins had not read the book recently.<sup>33</sup> It is impossible to state with any certainty how early Hopkins had come across the

<sup>30</sup> Gardner, *Poetic Idiosyncrasy*, II, 140 & Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 129. The phrases from *The Wreck* are 'I am soft sift / In an hourglass' (stanza 4), and 'the thickly / Falling flakes' (stanza 24). *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by W. H. Gardner and M. H. MacKenzie, 4th edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 52 & 59.

<sup>31</sup> Austin Warren, 'Instress of Inscape' in *Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*, pp. 72-88 (pp. 80-1).

<sup>32</sup> See *Letters to Bridges*, pp. 87-8 & 221 and *Further Letters*, pp. 370-1.

philological works of Barnes, but his comments to Bridges indicate great sympathy for Barnes's programme of Saxonisation, albeit tempered by a degree of incredulity at the extent of Barnes's ambition.

Of the several dictionaries which embody the philological knowledge of the nineteenth century, Ogilvie's is the only one which we can be certain that Hopkins used,<sup>34</sup> although only as late as 1887 and by then he was aware of its etymological failings.<sup>35</sup> However, the name 'Hopkins, Rev. G.M.' is recorded in the 'List of Unprinted Collections of Dialect Words Quoted in the dictionary by the initials of the compilers' in the prefatory pages to Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*, published nine years after Hopkins's death, in 1898.<sup>36</sup> This is not then, a work which Hopkins knew as a user, but one he was familiar with from the inside, being part of the team which produced it.

It seems likely that Hopkins was familiar with the ideas of Max Müller. Hopkins went up to Balliol in April 1863, the same year in which Müller, who had been the Taylorian Professor of Modern Languages at Oxford since 1853, was delivering his second series of lectures on 'The Science of Language'. If the presence of such a celebrated scholar working at the height of his powers was not enough to arouse the young poet's interest, then the threat of his Moderations exam (which Hopkins passed with a First the following year) may well have been. Although Hopkins's subject was Latin and Greek letters, for one part of the paper he was expected to have a working knowledge of the principles of

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<sup>33</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, p. 162.

<sup>34</sup> *The Imperial Dictionary, English, Technological, and Scientific; adapted to the Present State of Literature, Science, and Art*, ed. by John Ogilvie, 2 vols (Glasgow: Blackie, 1851).

<sup>35</sup> See *Further Letters*, p. 284.

<sup>36</sup> *The English Dialect Dictionary*, ed. by Joseph Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898; repr. 1981).

comparative philology.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Müller's *Lectures* were recommended reading for students aiming for the highest marks in this examination.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Hopkins's father, Manley was in correspondence, and perhaps even on calling terms with Müller: he certainly sent him a copy of his book on Hawaii.<sup>39</sup> Finally, in a diary entry of 1864, Hopkins makes a list of things 'to read' which includes 'Max Müller'.<sup>40</sup> Plotkin's book makes extensive use of the Müller connection, arguing that the foundations for Hopkins's poetic style were being laid through the new philology being practised at Oxford while Hopkins was a student there. It is unnecessary to re-examine the impact of Müller on Hopkins, but Müller is another source from which Hopkins may have absorbed information about the Anglo-Saxon language.

Most scholars assume that Hopkins had read Richard Trench's lectures, *On the Study of Words*, published in 1851, and often reprinted. The main evidence for this is a passage in Trench on the appositeness with which the kestrel is sometimes named 'windhover'. This concludes a section on the popular names of flora and fauna which also mentions the kingfisher and dragonfly. Milroy and Plotkin draw attention to this and also note that Trench later comments on how the word 'minion' has been debased; originally its

<sup>37</sup> I have included my findings concerning this part of Hopkins's curriculum in Appendix II. It does not belong in the body of this thesis as its relevance to the use of Anglo-Saxon in a modern poetics is oblique. It does however illustrate the detail in which students of Hopkins's generation were expected to manipulate the discoveries of the new science of linguistics, many of which were made through renewed, systematic study of earlier Indo-European languages, including Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>38</sup> Montagu Burrows, *Pass and Class: An Oxford Guide-Book through the Course of Literare Humaniores, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Law and modern History*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Parker, 1866). Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 45 cites Burrows as recommending Müller's *Lectures* on p. 79 of his 3rd edn. I have only been able to locate a 2nd edn of Burrows (1861), which is too early to cite Müller's *Lectures* (1st series in 1861, 2nd series in 1863). The recommendations made in the 2nd edn ('Buttmann's *Lexilogus*, and Donaldson's *New Cratylus* and *Varronianus*' and 'Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*' pp. 72-3) are corroborated by Plotkin's citation.

<sup>39</sup> Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, pp. 64-6.

<sup>40</sup> The memo is undated, but is later than a dated entry for 25 July, and earlier than one for 7 September. *Journals and Papers*, pp. 35-6.



meaning was 'favourite'.<sup>41</sup> The unstated inference made by both scholars is that Hopkins had read these lectures and drew on them either consciously or subconsciously when writing 'The Windhover' and 'As kingfishers draw fire, dragonflies draw flame'.<sup>42</sup> Alan Ward (who contributes 'philological notes' in an appendix to House's edition of Hopkins's *Journals and Papers*) also points out the similarities in style and content between Trench's discussion of a group of words connected with 'shear' and Hopkins's treatment of the same in his university journal.<sup>43</sup>

Trench's lectures were originally intended for the pupils of the Diocesan Training School in Winchester. They do not provide any specific account of Anglo-Saxon literature or language, although Trench expounds a number of primitivist theories about vocabulary which are of interest to the Hopkins scholar. Chief amongst these is Emerson's idea that all language is fossil poetry and that each word was originally a living metaphor. Original meanings (and even old meanings, which are closer to 'the original') are therefore 'best' meanings.<sup>44</sup> Resuscitating these fossil metaphors, or creating new metaphors, makes language more efficacious and powerful. This is a form of creative worship for Trench, for the power of naming is God-given (14-15). Thought and language are bound together, so that using words accurately is tantamount to perceiving and thinking accurately (2, 19, 23-5 & 51). It therefore follows that there is a morality implicit in language: degenerate and imprecise use of language implies the same in

<sup>41</sup> Trench, *Study of Words*, pp. 62-3 & 79. Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 82. Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Windhover' is dated 30 May 1877, while 'As kingfishers...' is undated and comes into Bridges's hands only after Hopkins's death. Bridges, who tries to observe a chronological order in his edition, decided to insert 'As kingfishers...' between 'Inversnaid' and 'Ribblesdale', i.e. with a date of late 1881 or early 1882. If we accept the conscious plundering of Trench's book during the making of 'The Windhover' and 'As kingfishers...', then one may conjecture that the two were probably composed around the same time. This would place 'As kingfishers...' within the group of 'Welsh sonnets' with which it shares a devotional exuberance.

<sup>43</sup> Trench, *Study of Words*, pp. 329-30 and *Journals and Papers*, pp. 12 & 514.

thought (7 & 27).<sup>45</sup> Moral truth can be more easily attained by the constant cleansing of language's impurities. Creating new words is a necessity to allow for the possibility of new thought and perception (206-7 & 262), but for Trench this is not to be done by borrowing foreign (especially Latin) words. These he considers to be arbitrary and empty in their new, English context, though they may be full of poetry in their own language. Rather, he advocates the adaptation of native materials which are already at hand (64, 118-9 & 202).<sup>46</sup> The link between Trench's signifier and his signified is so strong that they are practically synonymous, as in Adamic naming. This can be seen from a passage remarkably prescient of Hopkins's inscaping of words:

And this sense of the significance of names, that they are, or ought to be, - that in a world of absolute truth they ever would be, - the expression of the innermost character and qualities of the things or persons that bear them, speaks out in various ways.

In advancing these theories, Trench often has recourse to the Saxon etymology of a modern word, or offers an Anglo-Saxon specimen as an exemplar.<sup>47</sup> He mentions *Piers Plowman* on several occasions, and his footnotes refer the reader to Marsh's *Lectures*, Müller's *Lectures* and Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*, among other works.

Plotkin asserts that a copy of Wedgwood's *Dictionary of English Etymology*<sup>48</sup> was available to Hopkins, both as an undergraduate in the Oxford Union and later in the Arundel Library, Stonyhurst.<sup>49</sup> Although it is impossible to be certain that Hopkins consulted this work, Wedgwood was a popular defender of the onomatopoeic theory of

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<sup>44</sup> Trench, *Study of Words*, pp. x, 5-6, 43, 46-8 & 242n. Further references are placed in the main text.

<sup>45</sup> Pound holds a similar view (which he partly attributes to Confucius): 'the "statesman cannot govern, the scientist cannot participate in discoveries, men cannot agree on wise action without language", and all their deeds and conditions are affected by the defects or virtues of idiom'. Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber, 1951), p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Such nativism is linguistically naive, but in the hands of a talented poet it can produce interesting results.

<sup>47</sup> See in particular pp. 128-31, where Trench discusses how the socio-political history of the Saxons and Normans is embedded in current lexis. In making his point he also anecdotally refers to Wamba, from the first chapter of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

<sup>48</sup> Hensleigh Wedgwood, *A Dictionary of English Etymology*, 3 vols (London: Trübner, 1859-1865).

<sup>49</sup> Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 112.

language which, in 1863, Hopkins believed had 'not had a fair chance'.<sup>50</sup> It is therefore likely that Wedgwood's work would have attracted the poet's attention. Alan Ward also considers that 'there is slight evidence' that Hopkins had used Todd's revision of Johnson,<sup>51</sup> although from an etymological point of view, this dictionary is of less relevance to the present study.

The range of sources of information about Anglo-Saxon language and literature in the nineteenth century was so vast that it is impossible to give details of every work Hopkins could have come across. Chapter One touched on some of these works, and the reader is also referred to the publications time-line which forms Appendix I to this thesis. Brief mention, however, must be made of two books, Charles Knight's *Old England*,<sup>52</sup> and John Lingard's *The Histories and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*.<sup>53</sup> The former was among the books owned by the Hopkins family when Gerard was a child, and the latter was used for refectory readings at Stonyhurst while Hopkins was doing his philosophate there (October 1870 to June 1873).<sup>54</sup>

Knight does not offer any theoretical accounts of Anglo-Saxon poetry, but he does consider that 'the noble language - "the tongue that Shakspeare spake" - which is our inheritance, may be saved from corruption by the study of its great Anglo-Saxon elements'.<sup>55</sup> He also recounts a number of the more well-known anecdotes about early English poetry, such as William of Malmesbury's account of Aldhelm attracting a

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<sup>50</sup> *Journals and Papers*, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Knight, *Old England: a Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Baronial, Municipal and Popular Antiquities*, 2 vols (London: the author, 1845).

<sup>53</sup> John Lingard, *History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church; Containing an Account of its Origin, Government, Doctrines, Worship, revenues, and Clerical and Monastic Institutions*, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: C. Dolman, 1810, 1845).

<sup>54</sup> See Quinn, 'Hopkins's Anglo-Saxon', pp. 26-30, and Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, p. 149.

congregation by singing vernacular poetry. When dealing with the conversion of Edwin, he notes that Bede's story contains 'the best elements of high poetry' and 'gained little by being versified by Wordsworth' (whose paraphrase he quotes, I, 59). A translation, printed by half-lines, of the first five lines of *The Battle of Brunanburh* is also provided under the title 'Saxon Song' (I, 62). Bede's story of Cædmon is recounted and his creation hymn translated into modern English, after which Knight advances the then well-worn hypothesis that Milton's Satan must have been influenced by the 'Cædmonian Genesis' (I, 78-80).

Lingard treats Aldhelm and Cædmon as examples of Christian 'gleemen', but he also gives a fairly technical account of Anglo-Saxon prosody, based on Rask.<sup>56</sup> This is not too inaccurate and certainly corrects Rask's mistaken view that both stressed syllables in the a-verse must alliterate, but slightly obfuscates the accentual nature of Anglo-Saxon verse, by altering Rask's description of the alliterative syllables as 'emphatic' to 'long'.

#### Hopkins as a Nativist Poet

The above survey amply demonstrates the likelihood that Hopkins absorbed much about Anglo-Saxon, through his reading of various philologists, historians and lexicographers, before his mature style had fully emerged. At the very least he had digested the knowledge and opinions of George Marsh, prior to the composition of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'. It is now necessary to consider how that filtered knowledge affected his poetry.

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<sup>55</sup> Knight, *Old England*, I, 79-80. Further references in main text.

<sup>56</sup> Lingard, II, 153-9.

It is often claimed that Hopkins preferred words of native rather than foreign derivation.<sup>57</sup> His work certainly gives this impression, but such linguistic patriotism was not unusual in his day, and compared to William Barnes or William Morris, Hopkins seems rather moderate in this respect. Nor was his writing always in this nativist tradition. His two surviving pre-college poems, 'The Escorial' (Easter 1860), and the Keatsian 'A Vision of Mermaids' (Christmas 1862) are far from lexically pure. What can be detected in Hopkins's poetic career is an increasing reliance on native words as his style matures. This is apparent in the poems he writes while at Oxford,<sup>58</sup> exposed to Müller and the rich philological tradition for the first time, and is reinforced by the poems written after his 'silent gap' of 1867-1876 (by 1873 he had read Marsh's *Lectures*).<sup>59</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that philology prompted his predilection for words of native origin. Given the moral emphasis placed on linguistic nativism during the nineteenth century (see Chapter One), this is hardly surprising. As the link between George Marsh and Hopkins has been so firmly established, it is worth considering in more detail Marsh's views on the subject, in order to ascertain what this native 'word-hoard'<sup>60</sup> may have meant to Hopkins and the difference it makes in reading his poems.

<sup>57</sup> See for example, Gardner, *Poetic Idiosyncrasy*, I, 113, where he judges Hopkins to use 'roughly five percent more words of Teutonic origin' than Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Arnold and Meredith. Also Graham Storey, *A Preface to Hopkins*, 2nd edn (New York: Longman, 1992), p.80.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Alchemist in the City' (1865); 'Let me be to Thee...' (1865); 'Heaven-Haven' (c. 1864-6); 'The Habit of Perfection' (1866); 'For a Picture of St. Dorothea' (c. 1866).

<sup>59</sup> By my calculations, taken together, the two pre-college poems average at 75.5% of their total words being of Teutonic derivation (the earlier of the two, 'The Escorial', is as low as 70.8%). The average for the college poems is 83.4%, and for a similar number of mature poems ('The Starlight Night', 'The May Magnificat', 'As kingfishers catch fire...' and 'Harry Ploughman'), the figure is 85.5%. This figure discounts all proper nouns, treats compound words in their separate parts (in some cases, the elements of a compound are of different etymological origins), and counts every recurrence of individual words. Foreign words which had been fully naturalised during the Anglo-Saxon period (e.g. 'circle', A-S. *circul*) are also counted as native. The 10% rise in number of native words from Hopkins's juvenile work to his mature poetry, confirms the impression stated above.

<sup>60</sup> A-S. *wordhoord* is the total stock of vocabulary available to a poet. To unlock the word-hoard is to speak, or to compose poetry. See *Beowulf*, line 259 in *Beowulf: A Student Edition*, ed. by George Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 43.



### Marsh as a Nativist Writer

Firstly, Marsh believes native vocabulary to express its meaning honestly, while words borrowed from Romance languages are instruments of deception. The attentive foreign student of the English language should realise that:

the language of the purposes and the affections of the will and of the heart, is genuine English-born; that the dialect of the market and the fireside is Anglo-Saxon; that the vocabulary of the most impressive and effective pulpit orators has been almost wholly drawn from the same pure source; that the advocate who would convince the technical judge, or dazzle and confuse the jury, speaks Latin; while he who would touch the better sensibilities of his audience, or rouse the multitude to vigorous action, chooses his words from the native speech of our ancient fatherland; that the domestic tongue is the language of passion and persuasion, the foreign, of authority, or of rhetoric and debate.<sup>61</sup>

Not only is Anglo-Saxon vocabulary more honest, it is also more likely to be understood by the uneducated, even when the chosen words are archaic and have not been in common currency for some time:

Deep in the recesses of our being, beneath even the reach of consciousness, or at least of objective self-inspection, there lies a certain sensibility to the organic laws of our mother-tongue, and to the primary significance of its vocabulary, which tells us when obsolete, unfamiliar words are fitly used, and the logical power of interpreting words by the context acts with the greatest swiftness and certainty, when it is brought to bear on the material of our native speech. The popular mind shrinks from new words, as from aliens not yet rightfully entitled to a place in our community, while antiquated and half-forgotten native vocables, like trusty friends returning after an absence so long that their features are but dimly remembered, are welcomed with double warmth, when once their history and their worth are brought back to our recollection. So tenaciously do ancient words and ancient forms adhere to the national mind, that persons of little culture, but good linguistic perception, will not unfrequently follow old English or Scottish authors with greater intelligence than grammarians trained to the exact study of written forms. (176)

This instinctive response to words which at first sight appear alien is important to Hopkins's poetic. It is also analogous to the strategy of 'difficult' writers from the early modernist period, whose unusual formal devices initially shock the reader into a state of defamiliarisation, from which he or she is expected to struggle towards an act of recognition. Having perceived the familiar afresh, as if for the first time, the reader is assumed to have achieved a more immediate grasp on its objective reality.



Marsh, like many of his contemporaries, is particularly interested in the literary application of his theories. Of particular significance is his claim that:

there is abundant reason to hope that we may recover and reincorporate into our common Anglican dialect many a gem of rich poetic wealth, that now lies buried in more forgotten depths than even those of Chaucer's "well of English undefiled." (87)

Marsh challenges writers to transfer the earliest linguistic resources of English into the present day and so extend the reservoir of living (not fossilized) metaphors in the active word-hoard.

In his sixth lecture, Marsh examines the lexical make-up of fifty-two works or passages of literature by thirty-four authors. The passages range from the Middle English period to the nineteenth century and include selections from *Piers Plowman*, Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare, the King James Bible, Johnson, Gibbon, the Brownings, Tennyson and others. There is a strong literary bent and a large number of poets represented. The employment of Anglo-Saxon vocabulary is given in percentages and these range from ninety-six percent (Robert of Gloucester and chapters from John's Gospel in the King James Bible) to sixty-eight percent (Swift's 'Political Lying': a telling example). From this data, Marsh concludes:

The most interesting result of these comparisons, [...] is the fact, that the best writers of the present day habitually employ, in both poetry and prose, a larger proportion of Anglo-Saxon words than the best writers of the last century. (126)

Marsh then notes that since Johnson's time, even more Latinate and other foreign terms have come into the language (introduced through advances in knowledge, science and technology), while the number of Anglo-Saxon words has altered little. For nineteenth-century writers to achieve a higher percentage of 'home-born' words than those of the eighteenth century, despite this fact, is seen by Marsh as a triumph of taste:

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<sup>61</sup> Marsh, *Lectures*, p. 86. Further references in main text.

This recognition of the superior force and fitness of a Saxon phraseology, for all purposes where it can be employed at all, is the most encouraging of existing indications with respect to the tendencies of our mother-tongue, as a medium of literary effort. (127)

The argument that the more native words one uses, the stronger one's writing might appeal to a philologically-minded writer of sermons, lectures and poems such as Hopkins. We have already seen Marsh assert that native words are more intelligible and telling, and paradoxically familiar, even when they are strange. He also argues that such words have a greater generative and associative power than loan words:

The native word at every change of form and meaning exhibits new domestic relations and suggests a hundred sources of collateral inquiry and illustration, while the foreign root...comes usually in a fixed form, and with a settled meaning, neither of which admits of further development, and of course the word has no longer a history. (106)

In particular it is the history of a word which Marsh finds productive in this respect:

A knowledge of the primitive sense of a word very often enables us to discover a force and fitness in its modern applications which we had never suspected before, and accordingly to employ it with greater propriety and appositeness. (105-6)

It is precisely a forceful and fit language which Hopkins pursues to convey the unique inner form which he perceives in each individual object or event.<sup>62</sup> His language is 'fit' in that he is satisfied only with the most precise match between the haecceity of the word and its referent; and 'forceful' because it is imperative that this relationship is communicated to the reader unmistakably, by the shock tactics of defamiliarisation if necessary.<sup>63</sup>

Scholars have demonstrated how etymological knowledge can illuminate the meaning of a word in a Hopkins poem.<sup>64</sup> What is of concern here is Marsh's insistence that the etymology of native English words is especially instrumental in triggering this force and

<sup>62</sup> In Hopkins's own terminology, one might say 'to instress the unique inscape' of each object or event. On these terms, see Austin Warren, 'Instress of Inscape', in *Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*, pp. 72-88

<sup>63</sup> See for example, *Letters to Bridges*, p. 66 where Hopkins writes 'now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer. This vice I cannot have escaped' (15 February 1879); or p. 89, which finds him arguing that 'the poetical language of an age shd, be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself' (14 August 1879).

fitness (the last quotation given follows his recommendation that Anglo-Saxon should become the backbone of the education system, partly as a help to the study of etymology, supplanting Greek and Latin).<sup>65</sup>

Marsh gave Hopkins ample reason to regard words of Anglo-Saxon derivation to be of special value. Indeed, from his letter of 26 November 1882, we know that he admired Barnes's attempts to re-Saxonise the English language, despite believing Barnes's methods were too ambitious to meet with wide success.<sup>66</sup> Hopkins was certainly not a fanatical linguistic purist: if a Romance-derived word was of more use to him, he employed it. 'The Windhover', with its 'minion', 'dauphin', 'chevalier', and 'sillion', amply demonstrates that he was not dogmatic in this respect. In this poem Hopkins manipulates chivalric ideals, and the language of chivalry is (for straightforward historical reasons), not of Anglo-Saxon derivation. With this caveat, two poems are now studied in detail, in the light of Marsh's views on etymology, familiarity, networks and development of meanings, and force and fitness. 'The Starlight Night' (written in February 1877) and 'Harry Ploughman' (September 1887), have been chosen because they are representative of two phases in Hopkins's development (the early mature style and the late mature style), and because they are short (Hopkins's nativist vocabulary is so dense that in-depth lexical analysis of a longer poem would be unnecessary). Detailed reference will be made to nineteenth-century etymological dictionaries. At times this may seem dry, but its purpose is to show how closely Hopkins drew on such knowledge in his choice of vocabulary.

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<sup>64</sup> See Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 41-4 for example.

<sup>65</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, this policy was earlier advocated by Thomas Jefferson.

<sup>66</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, pp. 162-3.

'The Starlight Night'

From its opening imperative, 'The Starlight Night' bids its reader to scrutinize the stars of the night sky. The poem draws further attention to the stars through an extended list of metaphorical designations, each appositional to the first item:

Look at the stars ! look, look up at the skies !  
 O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air !  
 The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there !  
 Down in dim woods the diamond delves ! the elves'-eyes !  
 The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies !  
 Wind-beat whitebeam ! airy abeles set on a flare !  
 Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare ! –  
 All well ! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.  
 Buy then ! bid then ! – What? – Prayer, patience, alms, vows.  
 Look, look : a May-mess, like on orchard boughs !  
 Look ! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows !  
 These are indeed the barn ; withindoors house  
 The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse  
 Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.<sup>67</sup>

No finite verbs are governed by the stars, and consequently there are no complete sentences after line two, until the last (other than as the continuous object of our attention: all the star-like, substantive phrases are really objects of 'look at...!', despite the frequent suppression of that verb). Only then, with the introduction of Christ, is an unambiguous attributive statement about the stars achieved, when Hopkins reveals them to be the visible light of the Heavenly Kingdom, piercing the gaps in the celestial barrier of the sky. None of the stellar tropes have any primacy over the others and they are all equally subordinate to their first and last expressions; stars and Heavenly Host. For Hopkins, the ideal reader of this poem will also see that not only are the stars evidence of the Light of Christ, but so are the march-blooms, flake-doves, airy abeles and all the rest. The physical substances are likenesses of each other, but they are revealed to be (not merely to be like) God's presence.

The effect of this repetition of tropes for the stars is remarkably like variation: a technique used in Anglo-Saxon verse, whereby the qualities of a person or thing are listed in an extended passage of appositional phrases. As demonstrated in the last chapter, variation was identified as one of the most significant characteristics of Anglo-Saxon verse from early in the nineteenth century (not surprisingly: to the beginner it is probably the feature most strikingly unlike later poetry). It is quite possible that Hopkins had read of this appositional style of Anglo-Saxon. Significantly, Cædmon's 'Creation Hymn', in subject-matter close to 'The Starlight Night', was often used by nineteenth-century writers to demonstrate the device, although it was not then termed 'variation', and was frequently disparaged.<sup>68</sup> While it is conjecture that the appositional phrases of 'The Starlight Night' are styled after accounts of Anglo-Saxon variation, the etymological roots of many of the terms certainly repay detailed attention.

In contemporary usage a 'borough' is a civic community, a town, or an administrative area. It does not require much specialist knowledge to be aware of the fact that 'borough'

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<sup>67</sup> Poem no. 31 in *Poems*, 4th edn, pp. 66-7.

<sup>68</sup> See Sharon Turner, who notes 'FROM these specimens of the Anglo-Saxon vernacular poetry it will be seen that its leading features were metaphor and periphrasis.' Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), IV, 398. In the 2nd edn, after giving the Anglo-Saxon text and modern English translation of Cædmon's 'Hymn', Turner writes; 'In these eighteen lines the periphrasis is peculiarly evident. Eight lines are occupied by so many phrases to express the Deity. These repetitions are very abruptly introduced; sometimes they come in like so many interjections.' Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807), II, 279. See also John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. by William Daniel Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), pp. xxviii-xxxi, where Cædmon is again used to demonstrate the effect; Thomas Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria; or Biography of Literary Characters of Great Britain and Ireland, arranged in Chronological Order: Anglo-Saxon Period* (London: John Parker, 1842), p. 9; Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, 4 vols, rev. by W. Carew Hazlitt, with notes and new additions by Skeat, Furnivall and others (London: Reeves and Turner, 1774-81, 1871), II, 5. In the same year as Hazlitt's revision of Warton, Taine's popular *History of English Literature* was first translated from French into English. According to Taine; 'the [Anglo-Saxon] poets cannot satisfy their inner emotion by a single word. Time after time they return to and repeat their idea. "The sun on high, the great star, God's brilliant candle, the noble creature!" Four subsequent times they employ the same thought, and each time under a new aspect. All its different aspects rise simultaneously before the barbarian's eyes, and each word was like a shock of the semi-hallucination which excited him.' Taine's parody of Anglo-Saxon poetry puts one in mind of Hopkins's 'The Starlight Night'. H. A. Taine, *History of English Literature*, trans. by H. Van Laun, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), I, 43.



comes from A-S. *burg*, which meant a fortified town or stronghold. This latent sense cannot be entirely dead in the poem when 'the bright boroughs' is immediately paralleled by a variant noun-phrase 'the circle-citadels'. The two words gloss each other and develop the range of meanings latent in both. This is a perfect example of one of the techniques by which Hopkins draws our attention to an earlier meaning of a word: he creates an etymological rhyme between one word's obsolete meaning (here 'borough'/'*burg*') and another word which shares the same meaning in contemporary usage ('citadel').<sup>69</sup> Not only does the modern sense of 'citadel' reactivate 'borough' as a fortress, but 'borough' also recalls 'citadel's' relationship with Italian *città* and our 'city' (a civic community). Consequently, the stars/Kingdom of Christ locus is invested with a sense of the social and communal; a place where one is among the company of others and a place which is impregnable, impenetrable to those unwanted (or unworthy) beyond its walls. In turn, this reinforces 'paling', which later 'shuts the spouse/ Christ home,' and comes from Latin *palus* (stake), meaning fence or stockade; also a *burg*.

So far, this etymological overlaying depends as much on Romance philology ('citadel' and 'paling') as it does on Anglo-Saxon ('boroughs'). To reiterate: Hopkins is not an extremist of Teutonic purity. By training, he was a classicist. Critics frequently underplay this in their eagerness to seek out Germanic and/or Celtic models for his poetic practice. Nor does Marsh himself license 'a spirit of unenlightened and fanatical purism'<sup>70</sup> in this respect. What is significant is that these (originally) foreign words become historically three-dimensional when placed in a network of usage and association with an etymologically reactivated Anglo-Saxon-derived word.

<sup>69</sup> Other examples include 'her earliest stars, earlstars, stars principle' (from 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves') and possibly 'asunder' with 'sand' ('The Wreck of the Deutschland'). See Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pp. 42-3, although the term 'etymological rhyme' is my own.



If the associations suggested by the histories of the Romance words stop here, 'boroughs' is yet more fruitful. The *OED* notes that *burg* probably comes from an old Teutonic root, the verbal form of which it gives as *\*bergan* 'to shelter'. This appears to give rise to OE *beorgan* 'to save, deliver, preserve, guard, defend, fortify, spare' and, according to J. R. Clark Hall, has a variant spelling *byrgan*, of which one of the fields of meaning is 'to raise a mound, hide, 'bury,' inter'.<sup>71</sup> Its corresponding noun is *byrgen* 'burying-place, grave, sepulchre'. In a poem about Heaven, 'boroughs' etymologically refers to a resting place for the dead. This knowledge was available to Hopkins in several nineteenth-century dictionaries.<sup>72</sup>

Such investigation would be irrelevant if it didn't make sense to a reading of the poem: if (to paraphrase Marsh), it didn't exhibit new domestic relations and suggest sources of collateral inquiry and illustration, or enable us to discover a force and fitness in this specific application of words in the poem. The diachronic investigation of the earlier uses of 'borough' builds up a rich web of associations and imagery in 'The Starlight Night', which add a very forceful and fit weight indeed. Symbolic of Heaven, the stars are also social communities, powerful fortresses to keep out the unworthy, storehouses against times of privation, places of shelter, safety and deliverance (a thematic echo of the

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<sup>70</sup> Marsh, *Lectures*, p. 87.

<sup>71</sup> *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. by J. R. Clark Hall, 4th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 62.

<sup>72</sup> For example Ogilvie notes that 'the original sense [of borough] probably is found in the verb Sax. *beorgan*, D. and G. *bergen*, Russ. *beregu*, to keep or save, that is, to make close, or secure. *The Imperial Dictionary*, I, p. xx. Wedgwood also notes *beorgan* as the probable origin and cross-references the entry with 'bury'. *Dictionary of English Etymology*, I, 284. Under 'bury', as well as the expected burial of corpses, Wedgwood also records '*bergh*, a barn, a place where corn is stowed away and preserved.' This is interesting in light of the transformation that the stars make in Hopkins's sestet, into a barn which houses shocks (stooks) of corn; a harvest of souls.

'Haven' which is in 'Heaven', as exemplified in the title of one of Hopkins's earlier poems),<sup>73</sup> and resting places for the dead.

This is not an isolated example. The most obvious way to understand 'mealed' is that the budding trees are covered in a fine, pale powder, like the meal produced when grain is ground down (from A-S. *melu*). This is more carefully observed than one might suppose: 'sallow' is a generic term for several small types of willow, which produce yellow catkins before coming into leaf. These catkin-laden willows look as if they are dusted with a mealy powder. There is another 'meal' however, an obsolete verb, from A-S. *mælan*, meaning to spot or stain (apparently where 'mole' comes from). Hall attests only one occurrence of the verb *mælan*, but several of the related noun *mæl*, whose many meanings include 'mark', 'sign', 'cross' and 'crucifix'. Wedgwood also notes 'AS. Cristes *mæl*, the sign of the cross'.<sup>74</sup> Such specifically Christian resonances in the history of a word used to describe the appearance of trees bursting into new life may not be accidental.

Of course, simply inserting one of these fossilised meanings in the sentence ('Look! March-bloom, like on crucified-with-yellow sallows!') makes little sense to the pictorial imagination and scarcely makes grammatical sense, but that is not the point. Rather, Hopkins exploits the network of meanings that are woven around native words, making use of the resources of individual Saxon words as Marsh had advocated. If Hopkins had looked up 'meal', one of his favourite words (c.f. 'leafmeal' and 'mealdrift') in any of the Victorian dictionaries newly based on etymological principles, he would have been aware of the two Anglo-Saxon roots which generated two different 'meals'. Two contemporary lexicographers, Ogilvie and Richardson, both offer the radical sense of A-S. *mealewe* as

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<sup>73</sup> *Poems*, 4th edn, p. 19.

something ground down to a powder and Richardson suggests a connection with Lat. *molere*, to grind or crush.<sup>75</sup> We know from a detailed etymological word list in Hopkins's early diaries that he was interested in words connected with 'grind' and himself had linked 'grain' to that lexical grouping.<sup>76</sup> Given the nineteenth-century tendency to reduce individual lexical items to common roots, according to perceived phonetic and semantic similarities (typified by what Plotkin calls Hopkins's 'phonosemantic method'), Hopkins may well have considered the Anglo-Saxon forms to be related. Even if he did not, the fortuitous coincidence of connotations which, over time, have gathered around the words now spelt with one orthography, and which contribute to the resonance of that word within the poem, could have only pleased the poet and convinced him of its suitability.

### 'Harry Ploughman'

Written ten years after 'The Starlight Night', the exploitation of native etymology is even more dense in 'Harry Ploughman'. Harry, like Chaucer's ploughman in *The General Prologue* and Piers, is made by his surname into the hard-working Christian ideal. His labour reminds the reader (if trained in the classics, like the poet), that in Latin the verb *colo, colere, colui, cultum* is both to cultivate or till the land, and to worship.<sup>77</sup>

Hard as hurdle arms, with a broth of goldish flue  
Breathed round; the rack of ribs; the scooped flank; lank  
Rope-over thigh; knee-nave; and barrelled shank—  
    Head and foot, shoulder and shank—  
By a grey eye's heed steered well, one crew, fall to;  
Stand at stress. Each limb's barrowy brawn, his thew

<sup>74</sup> Wedgwood, *Dictionary*, II, 395.

<sup>75</sup> *A New Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. by Charles Richardson, 2 vols (London: Pickering, 1836-37), II, 1269.

<sup>76</sup> *Journals and Papers*, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> William Barnes is pleased with this dual meaning and records it in the preface to his *An Outline of English Speech-Craft* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878), p. vi; a book Hopkins read. The Latin motto *laborare est orare* ('to work is to pray') is also relevant here. Hopkins again uses ploughing in a devotional context in 'The Windhover'.



challenged by the poem. Anglo-Saxon etymology accentuates this ambiguity of state, as is now shown.

Used of Harry's thigh, the modern connotations of 'lank' (long, limp, thin or gaunt), might be thought to undermine the impression given elsewhere of his muscularity. However, one of the original meanings of the word (A-S. *hlanc*), was 'flexible' or 'loose'.<sup>81</sup> In a poem preoccupied with flexibility and movement, one can see how this earlier meaning might demand the reader's attention as much as more recent uses of the word. It clearly contributes to the picture of powerful elasticity in Harry's thigh-muscles and rope-like tendons.

The striking compound, 'knee-nave' might first suggest the nave of a church. This makes little sense in context, although if intended Hopkins would probably have been aware of its ultimate derivation from Latin *navis* (ship),<sup>82</sup> which would then anticipate the crew of the next full line.<sup>83</sup> However, a less common 'nave', which provides us with a more likely interpretation, is from Anglo-Saxon *nafu* and refers to 'the central part of a block of a wheel, into which the end of an axle-tree is inserted; a hub' (*OED*).<sup>84</sup> This nub (navel) of a wheel-axle specifies something about Harry's knee-joint: it is like the moving parts of a farm-cart. Man and machine become one.

<sup>81</sup> Wedgwood offers 'pliant' for the cognate German *schlank* (*Dictionary*, II, 310), and Richardson records that 'Skinner proffers the Ger. *Gelenck*, *agilis*, from *lencken*, *flectere*, to bend or turn (nimble)'. *New Dictionary*, II, 1191.

<sup>82</sup> This etymology is noted by Trench in *Lectures*, p. 264.

<sup>83</sup> If the 'grey eye's heed', or careful attention that 'steered well' (line four) has any of the force of its root A-S. *hedan* ('take control of' or 'take possession of'), Harry's mastery over the plough is further emphasised.

<sup>84</sup> Ogilvie gives this as the first definition of nave, that of a church the second, but does not note its Latin derivation, prefixing both entries with 'Sax. *nafa*, *nafir*; G. *nabe*.' *Imperial Dictionary*, II, 222. Richardson also lists both meanings under the Anglo-Saxon root and adds the comment 'Wachter and Ihre agree that the word *naef*, *nafa*, in almost all languages, eastern and western, means either hollow, or is applied to things that are hollow', using this to explain the naves in wheels and in churches. *New Dictionary*, II, 1333.

'Shank' (A-S. *scanca*) is an old word for the leg-area (c.f. Edward 'Longshanks' and 'shank's pony'). However, Harry's 'barrelled shank' offers a more complex network of relevant associations. Its use in the science of ropes and splices (a shank of rope) refers the reader back to Harry's 'rope-over thigh'. It can also signify 'the main part of a tool, between the working part and the handle',<sup>85</sup> and so again evokes a labourer's tools. Harry is being revealed as an instrument of God.

As Milroy notes,<sup>86</sup> 'thew' does not suggest only muscle. In fact this is quite a late meaning of 'thew', according to the *OED*, being a misapplication of the word when revived by Walter Scott. Earlier, it indicated 'vigour' or the 'physical good qualities, bodily powers of a man' (*OED*). A-S. *theaw*'s range of meanings also included usage, custom, habit, conduct, disposition, virtue, manners, morals and morality.<sup>87</sup> Awareness of the word's history adds depth to the portrait of Harry: not only does he ready himself physically, but his moral resolve is also reaffirmed before beginning work.

The verb 'quail' is one of those tantalising words recorded as origin 'unc'. The *OED* conjectures a relationship with ME *quailen*, but nothing earlier and states that 'phonology, sense, and date are against any connexion with early ME. *quelen*' ('to die a violent death'). However, under *quelen*, a second verb is recorded, the rare 'quell', derived from Anglo-Saxon or Old Saxon *cwellan* and connected with the German *quellen*

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Wedgwood correctly separates the two and notes their different etymologies. *Dictionary of English Etymology*, II, 448-50.

<sup>85</sup> *Collins Concise Dictionary*.

<sup>86</sup> Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 246.

<sup>87</sup> All the contemporary dictionaries note both the physical and moralistic uses of 'thew', Wedgwood believing that they cannot be connected (*Dictionary*, IV, 386), contrary to Ogilvie (*Imperial Dictionary*, II, 998) and Richardson. The latter eccentrically adds 'Theaw is itself probably from the A-S. verb *The-an*, to



meaning 'to well out, flow'. Nineteenth-century lexicographers routinely amalgamated the forms which the *OED* scrupulously keeps apart,<sup>88</sup> but the less cautious, Victorian etymologizing reinforces the poem's presentation of Harry as a viscous, semi-solid figure with a 'liquid waist'. His 'threw / That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank,' is peculiarly apposite and to my mind indicates that Hopkins was aware of the etymological associations being put forward for 'quail'.

Even 'the wallowing o' the plough' gains in precision if one scratches the etymological surface of 'wallow.' Not only does the word suggest rolling around in mud, perhaps enjoyably, but A-S. *wealwian* can specifically mean to revolve, to roll, of a round object (like a wheel in an agricultural machine, or Harry's axle-like 'knee-nave'). It has also been used of a ship, when it rolls from side to side. Steering the plough-ship through the furling soil-waves, the presence of *wealwian* in 'wallow' makes it a perfect expression of Harry's activity.

W.H. Gardner occasionally employed this kind of interpretative tactic. On the subject of Hopkins's diction and syntax he writes:

There are other words to which the reader must bring a lively imagination and also a good etymological dictionary. Harry Ploughman's curls "wag or *crossbridle*"; and as we are told next that they are "wind lifted, windlaced". We know that *-bridle* is used here in the double sense of (a) 'rise', as with pride and (b) 'twist', 'weave', like the straps of a horse's bridle (cf. cognate 'braid' < O.E. 'bregdan' = twist, pull). Thus the word is elucidated, though obscurely, by its context.<sup>89</sup>

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get, to thee; and means, - Gotten or gained, gifted or endowed. *Thews* seems to be - Gifts, attainments, acquirements, endowments, qualifications or qualities, bodily, or mental'. *New Dictionary*, II, 1920.

<sup>88</sup> Ogilvie seems to regard both these forms as being connected, giving meanings 'to sink or languish, to curdle, and to crush or quell' (from another OE *cwellan*, to kill, murder or execute). *Imperial Dictionary*, II, 510. Wedgwood gives its first meaning as 'to curdle like milk' and offers a number of Romance cognates of which the Latin *coagulum* 'is commonly supposed to be the original. But the word admits of a perfect explanation from the Germanic root shown in Provincial English *quaggle*, a tremulous motion'. *Dictionary*, III, 3-4. It should be remembered that there is a speculative element in all etymology, even if lexicographers have become more cautious in their speculation.

<sup>89</sup> Gardner, *Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy*, I, 117.

To which one could add that there also exists an A-S. *bridlian* meaning 'to put a bridle on' or 'cur', 'control', 'guide'. Not only is 'bridle' an appropriate word to use of a ploughman's hair (for its connection with animals of burden), but it also makes an etymological rhyme with 'grey eye's *heed steered well*', amplifying the notion of Harry in total control of the forces of motion. To further gloss Gardner's 'rise, as with pride', the *OED* also has 'to throw up the head and draw in the chin (*like a horse*) to express pride, vanity' (my italics).

Discussing 'bluff hide' (printed in early editions as 'bluffhide'), Gardner remarks that 'the ploughman's heavy square-toed boots remind us of a "bluffhead" or headland: *bluff*- is especially apt, as it suggests the character of Harry Ploughman'.<sup>90</sup> Other associations are also justifiable here: the word has been used as to denote a blinker for a horse (now obsolete), and as a nautical term of uncertain origin (although Dutch or Low German sources seem the likeliest), it has been used adjectivally to mean 'presenting a broad, flattened front' (*OED*). Milroy is aware that nautical terms and applications of words are of particular interest to Hopkins; he notes thirteen instances in his 'A Commentary on Words used in Rare, Special or Non-Standard Senses in Hopkins's Poetry'.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in the adjectival form of 'bluff', the *OED* lists a second set of meanings which include 'big, surly, blustering, good-natured, frank, blunt, plain-spoken, it gives a notion of personal power or energy in an abrupt and good-natured way'.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 121-2.

<sup>91</sup> Appendix to Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. On Hopkins's admiration for sailors, see also Austin Warren, 'Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)', in *Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*, pp. 1-14 (p. 2). Michael Alexander has pointed out to me that Hopkins's father worked in maritime insurance: Gerard's interest in ship-wrecks may have something to do with this!

Finally, 'shot' clearly suggests the past participle of the verb to shoot (A-S. *sceotan*), but there is also a substantive form from A-S. *scot*. As well as meaning 'a shot' or 'shooting', it can also refer to a darting or rapid motion, clearly an idea applicable in this context. The *OED* notes a significant, obsolete application of the word for 'a rush of water'. Rather unexpectedly, the sixth definition given is 'the course of a plough'. Hopkins seems to have mined the rich deposits that history has let accumulate in 'shot' and brought them close to the surface, where they yield valuable readings to those able to interpret them.

Just as Harry's musculature draws attention away from its fixity, constantly reminding the reader of the work he is about to break into, so the poem's vocabulary draws attention to earlier usage. This process of etymology in reverse may seem endless: in a writer as philologically sensitive as Hopkins, it almost is. Hopkins's deployment of native words allows a whole range of historical meanings and associations to be re-activated in the manner that Marsh insists upon, and these primæval resonances impart a peculiar propriety and richness to each word in its place. The historical dimensions of a word solidify the impression that it, and no other, is sufficiently individuated to refer with complete accuracy to its subject matter. Such a dimension is crucial to a poet who understands the world by a Scotist epistemology: if everything has a unique but recognisable pattern (or 'inscape' in Hopkins's own terminology), a unique but recognisable word is required to fetch out that pattern. The archaeological layers within each word are also lexical inscapes that can be fetched out by context. This etymological device now seems to make unreasonable demands of a non-specialist readership, but as the last chapter demonstrated, during Hopkins's lifetime there was reason to suppose that Anglo-Saxon would become a more central part of the educational curriculum.

Hopkins's desire for an etymologically literate readership was not as eccentric as it now appears.<sup>92</sup>

### Word-binding

A feel for early English guided Hopkins's choice of vocabulary, but there was also information available to him about how Anglo-Saxon words were combined. This too offers possibilities for investigation with respect to Hopkins's poetry, which contains many striking compound words, often intriguingly similar to some of those found in Anglo-Saxon. If Hopkins began to learn Anglo-Saxon in the autumn of 1882, his reading knowledge of the language might be used as a partial explanation for coinings such as the 'chief-woe' and 'world-sorrow' (*woruldsorg*) of "No worst, there is none." (c. 1885) and 'heart sore' (A-S. *heort sarne*) and 'manwolf' (by analogy with *werwulf*) from 'Tom's Garland' (1887). It will not suffice in accounting for 'anvil-ding', 'foam-fleece', 'searomp' and 'heaven-haven' in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' (1876); 'fire-folk' and 'elves'-eyes' in 'The Starlight Night' (1877); 'bone-house' (c.f. *banhus*, lines 2508 & 3147 of *Beowulf*),<sup>93</sup> 'song-fowl' or 'flesh-bound' in 'The Caged Skylark' (1877). Hopkins's idiosyncratic habit of compounding, again, has its roots in his secondary reading on Anglo-Saxon. Milroy hints at this when he prefaces his discussion of compound words by saying 'the Saxon purists had advocated a return to the "Anglo-Saxon" conventions in this as in other things, and Hopkins obeyed their precepts splendidly'.<sup>94</sup> Beyond this, he does not speculate on links between Anglo-Saxon compounds and Hopkins's own. Nor does he provide specific details of the Saxon

<sup>92</sup> Not that eccentricity in itself would prevent Hopkins from pursuing a technique. See his letter to Bridges of 15 February 1879, *Letters to Bridges*, p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> *Beowulf*, pp. 174 & 208.

<sup>94</sup> Milroy, *Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 180.

purists' precepts, obeyed by Hopkins. There is room, therefore, to elaborate on this aspect of the Saxon connection.

Again, George Marsh provides the evidence needed to demonstrate this connection. Marsh is unequivocal on the benefits of combining words from native elements: compounds increase the range of vocabulary available, they allow greater syntactic flexibility, and when coined from Anglo-Saxon roots they are more 'expressive'.<sup>95</sup> Marsh backs up his argument with reference to what he calls 'the Anglo-saxon version' of the Bible. He claims that this, to its great advantage, was made independently of other translations<sup>96</sup> and consequently, even the socio-political terms specific to Roman Judea, are translated by Anglo-Saxon compounds. Several examples are given, including *witega*, 'a wise or knowing man' for 'prophet', and *bocere*, 'hundred-man' for 'centurion'. This wins great admiration from Marsh who believes that such characteristics should be encouraged in modern English.

Hopkins's letters to Bridges, show that he had considered the nature of compounds and had an advanced view of the subject.<sup>97</sup> He knew enough German to correct himself after having mentioned a German cognate of 'sake' in an earlier letter: 'that German word is *sache*, not *sach*, except in compounds: you should have set me right'.<sup>98</sup> Bridges must have been critical of certain new compounds in English,<sup>99</sup> for Hopkins's reply of 1

<sup>95</sup> Marsh was cited on Anglo-Saxon compounds in the previous chapter (from his *Lectures*, p. 200). See also *Lectures*, p. 198, where he claims 'the power of derivation and composition was eminently characteristic of our maternal Anglo-Saxon'.

<sup>96</sup> Presumably overlooking that its source in the Vulgate, was itself a translation.

<sup>97</sup> As previously mentioned, Hopkins was also familiar with William Barnes's attempts to invent a number of Saxonese compounds in *An Outline of English Speech-craft*. In a letter to Bridges of 26 November 1882, he compares Barnes's work to F. J. Furnivall, founder of the Early English Text Society, claiming it is 'beyond all that Furnivall in his wildest Forewords ever dreamed'. *Letters to Bridges*, p. 162-3.

<sup>98</sup> 14 August 1879. *Letters to Bridges*, p. 85; referring to 26 May 1879 (p. 83).

<sup>99</sup> Bridges's letters to Hopkins do not survive.

December 1882 has him defending his taste on the matter. 'Iceberg', he argues, is better than 'icelump', and 'fingerhood' or 'fingerstall' is an acceptable compound for 'thimble', whereas 'finger hut' is improper in the trope it uses. 'Earthapple' is stately, while 'potato' is ugly and laughable and 'clangtint' for the German *klangfarbe* is ridiculed as the worst compound in English. Hopkins required his compounds to have a certain dignity about them, dependent partly on how they sound, but also on the propriety (either literal or metaphorical) of each element. In the same letter he says that:

English compounds do not seem real single words or properly unified till by some change in form or spelling or slur in pronunciation their construction is disguised. This seems in English a point craved for and insisted on, that words shall be single and specific marks for things, whether self-significant or not; and it is noticeable how unmeaning our topographical names are or soon become, while those in Celtic languages are so transparent – not that their unmeaningness is any virtue, rather a vice;<sup>100</sup>

Hopkins believes the natural tendency of English compounds is to become single, inscrutable signs. Alteration in spelling and pronunciation encourage the origins of a compound to be obscured. The unfavourable comparison with Celtic place-names illustrates that Hopkins admires the visible, analysable compounds which he sees in other languages and believes should be striven for in English. Celtic place names are unlikely to be any more transparent to a native speaker (who takes the terms for granted in everyday use), than English place names are for Hopkins. The foreign student, forced to analyse a language in order to master it, frequently perceives much more about its workings than the native speaker who can nevertheless use it more effectively.

This point needs bearing in mind when considering the possible impact of Anglo-Saxon compounds on a Victorian poet. Compounding occurs frequently enough to be a striking feature of early English poetry. Klaeber notes of *Beowulf* that: 'fully one third of the

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<sup>100</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, pp. 165-6.



entire vocabulary, or some 1070 words, are compounds'.<sup>101</sup> Nineteenth-century scholars regarded with admiration this propensity for compounding as evidence of the stronger bond that supposedly then existed between words and their referents, as if the users of the language were somehow closer to the world they described. Marsh's remarks on the 'picturesqueness' of these words and how they 'bring the material creation vividly before us' illustrate this view.<sup>102</sup> It is easy to understand why this might be supposed: when the derivation of a compound word is obvious to its reader/hearer, it seems to explain much more about its referent than most simplexes do. If one does not understand Greek, then 'knowing-man' glosses its own meaning more effectively than 'prophet' does. There has been much recent debate about how transparent Anglo-Saxon poetic compounds were. As much of the poetic style seems to have been formulaic, it is possible that the audience took these compound signs for granted and may not have made the metaphorical leaps of the imagination that the tropes of the more unusual kennings suggest to us today. An analogy might be drawn with modern English 'breakfast', which seems picturesque to foreign students of English, yet native speakers regularly use it without thinking of breaking a night-long fast.

This enquiry into how 'live' the metaphors and etymologies of Anglo-Saxon compound words were to their contemporary audiences need not deter us. To the modern reader, all these compounds are more pictorial and vivid than their counterpart simplices. Hopkins's comments on Celtic place-names indicate that he clearly fell into imagining other languages to be more pictorial than his own. The strangeness of Anglo-Saxon compounds makes them all potential poems in the eyes of a Marsh or a Hopkins.

<sup>101</sup> *Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by Fr. Klaeber, 3rd edn (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1922, 1950), p. Ixiv.

<sup>102</sup> See fn. 48 in chapter one.

'The Loss of the Eurydice' as an Example of Hopkins's Practice in Compounding

Central to Hopkins's practice in coining his own compounds is a resistance to the gradual process of disguising lexical derivation and construction. To analyze this, a detailed study will be made of 'The Loss of the Eurydice', not only because it is rich in compounds, but because one stanza in particular seems to match these linguistic forms with thematic material very like that of Anglo-Saxon poetry (extracts of which Hopkins encountered as 'specimens' in his reading of philology). A great weight of evidence is presented: this is necessary to the argument, which will eventually relate Hopkins's practice to strategies of writing normally thought to be 'modernist'.

Examining specific examples of word-compounding in 'The Loss',<sup>103</sup> we find that in most cases the words are not 'unified' by a change in spelling, or made to seem 'real single words'. Their unusual hybridity is often highlighted by Hopkins's liberal use of the hyphen so that the striking, even jarring, nature of his compounds (and particularly his word-strings) actually resists the process of assimilation for which he said (in his letter to Bridges) the English language craves. In fact, 'The Eurydice' contains forty-three words (or strings if we count 'water-in-a-wallow' and 'brown-as-dawning-skinned') which one could regard as compounds.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> The full text, too long to quote entire, can be found as Poem no. 41, in *Poems*, 4th edn, pp. 72-6.

<sup>104</sup> Deducting words which seem to be established, and not of Hopkins's coining, we are left with twenty-six original compounds. 'Overwrought' is counted, as Hopkins's use of it as a finite verb (rather than an attributive past participle) appears to be unique. I also include the phrase 'Cheer's death', as it is a limiting genitive, which Arthur Brodeur refers to as 'logically identical' to compound words in his discussion of the diction of *Beowulf*, noting that 'poets seem to have felt no distinction' between the two. Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 14. G. A. Lester, agrees, 'so long as the essential figurative quality is present'. G. A. Lester, *The Language of Old and Middle English Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 14. 'Cheer's death' is figurative, and may be included in a study which compares Hopkins's compounds with those of Anglo-Saxon *scops*.

Although compounds formed with prefixes are not a particularly unusual feature of Modern English, Hopkins often creates conspicuous effects with them and the first stanza of 'The Eurydice' prominently includes two past participles compounded with 'un-' ('unawakened' and 'un-/warned'). Describing the victims of the disaster, this prefix introduces an almost structural motif, as it is picked up and sounded again as the poem moves into its conclusion; once with a participle ('unvisited', line 92), and once, in a daring move, with the name 'Christ' (line 96). The souls of the sailors are marked by the privative particle at the beginning of the narrative, when they still inhabit mortal flesh, and again after death when (from a Catholic point of view) they are in an unchristened state. In the latter stages of the poem, an echo of the sailors' condition is felt in the ancient (Catholic) shrines and holy places of England, which are without visitors. Deprived of what they deserve, the sailors of the Eurydice are, in several senses, unmanned by the catastrophe.

In its own right, this use of 'un-' as a motif is richly significant, but it is also grounded in a philological context. Marsh greatly praised Anglo-Saxon and other Germanic languages for their facility to compose forceful and vivid words with various intensifying, contrastive or limiting prefixes:

Icelandic, Anglo-Saxon and German, have many very forcible particles and modes of composition, by which a wonderful life and vigor is imparted to language. [...] The Anglo-Saxon inseparable particles *wan-*, *be-*, and *for-* corresponding to the German *ver-*, had great force and beauty, and the writer who shall restore them to their primitive use and significance will confer a greater benefit upon our poetical dialect than he who shall naturalize a thousand Romance radicals.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Marsh, *Lectures*, pp. 201-2. Further examples are given of words with prefixed Saxon particles, all of which are claimed to be preferable to their periphrastic modern counterparts; e.g. 'forbled' is better than faint from bleeding; 'forchased' better than weary with pursuit etc. As well as many verbs with the 'for-' prefix, Marsh also advocates 'wanhope' over despair and 'wantrust' over jealousy.

Many of his examples are past participles of verbs, as three of Hopkins's are in 'The Eurydice'. In a rueful note to the same passage, Marsh claims that 'the privative *un-* was formerly much more freely used than at present'.<sup>106</sup>

For 'unwarned' there is an exact Anglo-Saxon counterpart, *unwarnod*, cognate with *unwær* and *unwærlic* (unwary, heedless). If Hopkins was aware of such a precedent, then his word becomes the richer, perhaps carrying overtones of the parable from Luke's Gospel of the heedless householder who is taken unawares by the thief in the night. Viewed in this way, the prefix carries a great force with it: the crew have been deprived of a warning about the approaching storm, just as they are deprived of life, and of the opportunity for true spiritual salvation. This is reflected by the state of 'fast foundering' into which Britain, as a Protestant nation, has long since fallen. The break in this compound at the line-ending calls further attention to its composition, so that it cannot be mistaken for the less dramatic, but more commonplace contrastive meaning of the particle ('not warned', instead of 'deprived of warning'). Although one authorial intention behind this act of lexical disruption was to create the rhyme with 'fallen,' the effect of arousing the reader's anticipation until the particle is resolved into the participle is powerful.

While not as striking as 'unwarned', 'unawakened' is nevertheless an effective epithet. Not merely tautological in following 'asleep', it suggests what ought to have happened with admirable succinctness. Within this one word is contained the whole range of readiness to action which never occurred. The privative tone of the compound hints at the agent which should have given the sailors the opportunity of preparedness but did not. It hints at 'thee, O Lord', but is too subtle to name God and too pious to accuse Him. It is

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 204n.

hard to imagine an equivalent linguistic embodiment of this idea without a good deal of periphrasis.<sup>107</sup>

Turning to the compounds constructed from discrete and independent elements, 'flockbells' and 'forefalls' are the first the reader comes across.<sup>108</sup> In each case it is the second element of the composition which is the base-word (or determinatum). The first element is the limiting part of the compound which gives it its specific and unusual character (the determinant).<sup>109</sup> That is to say, it is bells and cliffs/slopes respectively to which Hopkins is referring. The compounding tells us what kind of bells (belonging to sheep) and what kind of slopes (facing the sea). The composite narrows down the range of meaning of the base word, which in these instances could be done with a nominal or adverbial phrase respectively, but with a loss of terseness. This pattern of a base, second element and a limiting first element (which Hopkins has frequent recourse to), is dominant in Anglo-Saxon compounds.<sup>110</sup> Other examples from 'The Eurydice' are 'death-gush' (line 62), 'sea-swill' (line 64),<sup>111</sup> 'sea-corpse' (line 73),<sup>112</sup> and 'doomfire' (line 119). Both *sæ-* and *deað-* are productive first element determinants in Anglo-Saxon substantive compounds. Semantically, *sæwylm* ('sea-surf') and *sæhete* ('sea-surge') are close to 'sea-swill' and *deaðdrepe* ('death-blow') and *deaðslege* ('death-stroke') look

<sup>107</sup> Another compound formed with a prefix is 'overwrought' (line 17), which as a verb (but not an adjective) is highly unusual in modern English, yet has an exact parallel in A-S. *oferwyrcean* ('to cover over').

<sup>108</sup> Both are unique to Hopkins. The latter is probably coined analogously with 'foreland' (c.f. 'Bloody Forelands' in Donegal), meaning slopes or cliffs facing the sea, as suggested in Norman H. MacKenzie, *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 99. Neither is particularly figurative (unless 'flock' is a synecdoche for 'sheep').

<sup>109</sup> For more detail on the use of these terms, and other aspects of analysing compound words, see Hans Marchand, *The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word-Formation: A Synchronic-Diachronic Approach*, 2nd edn (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche, 1969).

<sup>110</sup> See Brodeur, *Art of Beowulf*, pp. 11-2 and Lester, *Language of Old and Middle English Poetry*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>111</sup> Although both these might be considered as sharing the underlying syntax of limiting genitives; 'a gush of death' and 'the swill of the sea'.

<sup>112</sup> Slightly unusually, here the determinant ('sea') modifies the determinatum ('corpse') to indicate where it is found, or perhaps how it is caused (the body becomes a corpse as a result of the sea).

similar to 'deathgush' in form, if not in meaning, but the abundance of concrete nouns formed on these two roots is ample precedent for the coining of new compounds.

A variation on this basic pattern, the paradigm on which 'duty-swerver' is formed, is a familiar one. The referent is a person or thing and is always the second element, coined by nominalising a verb, characteristic of the subject, with the '-er' suffix, denoting 'one who does...'. In the first position, the determinant is the typical object of this typical action. It is something of a circumlocutory device and a strict linguist might not consider this (or a number of others in Hopkins's word-hoard) a compound word, but rather a synthetic compound or a kind of verbal derivative.<sup>113</sup> It offers, however, much more information than a straightforward simplex does and it is in keeping with Hopkins's poetic of naming a thing by virtue of what it does in the world: agency revealing essence through outward performance; instressing its inscape. Again, this paradigm stretches back to Anglo-Saxon times: *reordberend* ('speech-bearer', i.e. 'man'), *hædstapa* ('heath-stepper', i.e. 'stag'), *yðlida* ('wave-traveller', i.e. 'ship'), *lyftfloga* ('air-flier', i.e. 'dragon') and so on.<sup>114</sup> 'Starlight-wender' is of a similar pattern, but implies an adverbial idea of manner: wending *by* starlight. In a poem about the disastrous journey of a ship and its failure to reach harbour, it may be significant that the verb 'wend' has had a specifically nautical meaning of 'to turn (a ship's bow or head) to the opposite tack' (*OED*). The journey of the soul towards Heaven as allegorical sea voyage (which underlies *The Seafarer* and is implicit in Hopkins's title 'Heaven-Haven') may have informed the choice of this word.

<sup>113</sup> A man is not 'a swerver'. This coining does not fulfil the equation  $AB = B$  which is the benchmark for defining the linguistically pure compound (it is not endocentric). See Marchand, *English Word-Formation*, 2.1.5.0 - 2.1.6.5.2, pp. 13-17.

<sup>114</sup> Trench has examples of this category, see *Study of Words*, p. 79, where he deals with the analogous 'time-server'.



Although the above examples are mostly of the type [noun + noun = noun], first element specifying second can also describe compounds constructed from other parts of speech. The rough, foaming nature of the sea is aptly caught by the [verb + adjective = adjective] compound, 'champ-white'. The sea is as white as if it were itself champing (at the bit?), foamy-mouthed. Kenning-like, this word does not operate on a literal level, rather there is 'the intermingling of the symbol and the things symbolized', which E. G. Stanley believes to characterise Anglo-Saxon poetry.<sup>115</sup> The collocation between 'champ' and 'horse' is so strong that a native speaker is likely to find an equestrian symbol in this line; one which might be reinforced by the word 'charge', punning on 'charger'.<sup>116</sup> Given this, it may not be fanciful to posit an echo of the 'ocean-steed' metaphor for ships, common in Anglo-Saxon poetry and frequently cited in the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup>

'Care-drowned' echoes a number of Anglo-Saxon terms for a troubled and anxious state of the mind; a range of which can be found in the opening five and a half lines of *The Seafarer*. Anglo-Saxon has plenty of care-halls, abodes of care and breast-cares, although Hopkins's compound is more imaginative. His captain is metaphorically drowned (engulfed) by anxieties, but this figurative, second element also pre-figures a literal drowning still to come in the poem. The coining may have been Hopkins's own, but there is the close parallel of *carwylm*, a welling-up of sorrow, a care-surge, or (perhaps) a

<sup>115</sup> Stanley approvingly cites Wyld on this. E. G. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*', *Anglia*, 73 (1955), 413-66 (p. 414).

<sup>116</sup> See also Trench, *Study of Words*, p. 49, where he compares foaming waves to horses.

<sup>117</sup> Elaborated, in line 66 of *The Rune Poem*. See *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 6, ed. by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 29. More celebrated is the ship, described in line 218 of *Beowulf* as *flota famiheals*. See *Beowulf*, p. 41. This is cited in Thomas Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria; or Biography of Literary Characters of Great Britain and Ireland, arranged in Chronological Order: Anglo-Saxon Period* (London: John Parker, 1842), p. 12,

drowning flood of cares. The syntax of the two words is not identical, but 'care-drowned', is built on a pattern familiar from Anglo-Saxon, as are 'Bristol-Bred' and 'hoar-hallowed'.

In each of these cases there is a subject and a post-position adjectival compound (adjectives normally precede) of the type [noun + past participle]. Whether the two elements are written as one word, hyphenated, or written separately, this is identical in form to a host of Anglo-Saxon compounds.<sup>118</sup> *The Seafarer* offers several examples; *forste gebunden*, 'bound by frost' (following *mine fet*) and *winemægum bidroren*, 'deprived of kinsmen'<sup>119</sup> (delayed after *ic*), while from *The Wanderer* we get the compounds *edle bidæled*, 'separated from home' (after *ic*), *hrime bihroren*, 'covered with frost' (following *weallas*) and *dreame bidrorene*, 'deprived of joy' (in post position after the *waldend*). These last two examples also form an alliterative half-line pair, as does Hopkins's 'Bristol-bred'. This pattern is so common in Anglo-Saxon poetry that it quickly establishes itself as characteristic in the ear of anyone who reads a few poems in the original or in a relatively faithful translation. Hopkins's hyphenation may have been suggested by Marsh who constructs compounds on the same pattern in nonce-poems, imitative of Anglo-Saxon; 'cloud-wrought' (following 'garment'), 'Time-and-rhyme-

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and Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, 4 vols, rev. by W. Carew Hazlitt, with notes and new additions by Skeat, Furnivall and others (London: Reeves and Turner, 1774-81, 1871), II, 6.

<sup>118</sup> In fact these orthographic details have no bearing on whether a word is considered a compound or not. See Marchand, *English Word-Formation*, 2.1.14, p. 21.

<sup>119</sup> In apposition with the same noun we also have *bihongen hringicelum* ('hung with icicles'), which although appearing to be the same construction is in the opposite word order. To the modern English and/or prosaic way of thinking, this is in fact 'normal' word order and therefore not to be included in this group of compounds. That it was a possibility open to the *scop* in arranging his word-hoard demonstrates that the word-order in compounds we are dealing with is a significant poetic device and not syntactically determined.

renowned' (following 'castle') and 'toil-worn' (although this is in the conventional antecedent position).<sup>120</sup>

Although I refer to these second elements as past participles, the verbal quality in them has been completely suppressed. Their expansions would all have the function of an adverbial phrase, whether of manner ('toil-worn'), agentive (*forste gebunden*), or of place ('Bristol-bred'). In their thorough adjectivisation as compounds, these words have become more flexible (one of the positive qualities Marsh detects in Anglo-Saxon). They elude conclusive syntactic analysis. We recognise that they are formed from verbs and perform adverbial functions, yet they behave adjectivally and do away with the prepositional clutter of adverbial constructions. Furthermore, they are flexible enough to be moved around in the sentence (including into post-position) without being misinterpreted.

Superficially, 'deadly-electric' (line 24) is unlike Anglo-Saxon compounds, but grammatically it is not completely alien: the pattern [adjective + adjective] was common. The underlying syntax of the word is ambiguous. The cloud is not merely deadly *and* electric (although co-ordination is one way in which this combination could be analysed), but there is also a suppressed causal relationship between the two adjectives here (the cloud is deadly because it is electric), or perhaps an instrumental relationship (the cloud is deadly with electricity, although this then involves the transposition of an underlying nominal idea into adjectival form). If we consider such a grammatical transposition as a

<sup>120</sup> Marsh, *Lectures*, pp. 555-6. Marsh also includes the compound 'feathery-light' in his imitation. Apart from Hopkins's wider reading in the subject, these examples would have suggested some of the flavour of Anglo-Saxon compounding to him. Marsh also quotes an extract from the *Ormulum*, a poem which he calls Anglo-Saxon, even though it is now termed early Middle English. The passage includes the compounds *fulluhht* ('baptism') and *reghellboc* ('rule-book'), p. 523.

possibility in interpreting the compound then we might also posit a complementary relationship between it and the preceding predicative phrase: this cloud comes equipped with deadly electricity. The dense, rich ambiguity of the compound is further endorsement of the 'protean gift of transformation' which, according to Marsh, allows the poet to vary the arrangement of the sentence 'according to the emphasis, so as always to use the right word in the right place'.<sup>121</sup> In point of fact, this compound is delayed, being separated from the pronoun it is in apposition with ('he') by a line, and then followed by the variation 'A beetling baldbright cloud.' This delay and variation is typical of Anglo-Saxon poetry and indeed allows Hopkins to use the right word in the right place. It is the most dramatic word in a sentence which straddles three line breaks and a stanza break, and it falls in the most emphatic position, at the end of the sixth stanza. The syntactic flexibility which this compression affords Hopkins also ensures that the phrase can be placed in an alliterative context (here within a sequence of /k/ sounds).

This analysis of compounds will be concluded with a detailed examination of stanza seven, which, both thematically and syntactically, contains a number of key Saxonisms in its description of the storm. Neither of the terms for the storm-cloud (lines 24 and 25) is kenning-like: it is literally electric, deadly and (baldly) bright. Nothing at the figurative level in these composites reminds us of the more vivid compounds of *Beowulf*. This is not the case with the next three examples, characterising the weather. Only in the last of these, 'wolfsnow', is the determinatum literal. With a striking metaphor, the limiting first element specifies what kind of snow Hopkins has in mind. It is as cruel and dangerous as a wolf, as cruel and ominous as the wolves that wait to scavenge at battle-sites in Anglo-Saxon verse. The formulaic 'beasts of battle' motif was commonly used to indicate that

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<sup>121</sup> Marsh, *Lectures*, p. 173.

death and slaughter were at hand. Although figurative in Hopkins's poem, 'wolf' pre-figures the corpses of the dead sailors in a similarly foreboding manner. There are several extant Anglo-Saxon compounds with 'wolf' as first element, and as second element, the figurative *wæhwulf* ('slaughter-wolf', for 'warrior'), used in line 96 of the much-anthologised *Battle of Maldon*.<sup>122</sup>

With both 'hailropes' and 'heavengravel', the second part of the composite is already at a metaphorical remove from its signified: in this regard they are most kenning-like. In the first instance, 'hail' does act as a kind of limiting or defining element, but by re-introducing the literal. The reader is supposed to visualise streams of *hailstones* falling like ropes from the sky, but linguistically we encounter the grammatically super-ordinate *ropes*, hustling and grinding. What kind of ropes? Ropes modified by the determinant to be like, or made of, hail. For some this may be forcing an image. However, it has the nautical associations of ropes and is aurally felicitous where pictorially it is not: the couplet has an onomatopoeic edge. Whether or not one finds it strained, it is no more so than a number of the justifiably famous Anglo-Saxon kennings, such as *hildegicel* ('battle-icicle' for 'sword'), *sæhengest* ('sea-horse' for 'ship'), or *hwælweg* ('whale-path' for 'sea'). In Anglo-Saxon *hagol* only survives in compounds with the fairly literal *-faru*, *-scur* and *-stan*, much as one would expect, although there is a more promising precedent for a bad-weather compound with '-ropes' in the apparent *hapax legomenon* of *wælrapas*, from *Beowulf*, meaning something like 'flood-ropes' or 'flood-fetters', perhaps as a kenning for ice.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 9. Also *wulfheafodtreo* ('cross' or 'gallows'), from the *Riddles* and *wulfheort* ('cruel') from *Daniel*.

<sup>123</sup> Line 1610. *Beowulf*, p. 123.

'Heavengravel' operates in a similar way to 'hailropes': a non-literal dominant unit (gravel) is given definition by a more literal first element; something akin to gravel which originates from Heaven. A conspicuous figurative parallel offers itself in the well-attested *heofoncandel* (for 'sun', 'moon' or 'star').<sup>124</sup> Following his phonosemantic method, Hopkins may have linked 'gravel' to the 'grain' series of words he writes out in his college diaries (including 'grind', 'grit' and 'grate'), of which he says the 'original meaning [is] to *strike, rub*, particularly *together*' (i.e. how gravel is made from rock, as grain is made from corn).<sup>125</sup> This link is more probable, given his further notes on the *grind* series, made a few entries later, and in which he writes '*Grando* meaning splinters, fragments, little pieces detached in grinding, hence applied to hail' (p. 7). If Hopkins made an etymological association between 'gravel', used of 'hail', and ground corn ('grain'), it is irresistible to conclude that he knew of the Anglo-Saxon kenning for hail, *corna caldast* (the coldest of corn), found in line 33 of *The Seafarer*.<sup>126</sup>

These three compounds, linguistically so similar to Anglo-Saxon compounds, so kenning-like, so close in form to many other common Anglo-Saxon compounds, coming so close to each other in a passage about bad weather on rough seas strikes me as being highly indicative of an influence on Hopkins from Anglo-Saxon. The three composites are even in a sequence of variation. This technique is sometimes mistakenly represented as a series of synonymous repetition (by Sharon Turner, for example, as we have already seen). Such a view springs from a misunderstanding, not just of variation, but of lexis

<sup>124</sup> That Taine parodies Anglo-Saxon metaphors for the sun (including 'God's candle'), was mentioned in the analysis of 'The Starlight Night'. Taine, *History of English Literature*, I, 43. A-S. *heofon* forms a number of other compounds; among the meteorological are *heofoncolu* ('heaven-coal', or 'sun'), *heofonflod* ('downpour'), *heofonfyr* ('lightning'), *heofonleoht* ('heavenly light') and *heofonwolcen* ('heavenly clouds').  
<sup>125</sup> *Journals and Papers*, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 144. In line 25 of *The Rune Poem*, hail is called *hwitust corna* (whitest of grain), while the two Scandinavian rune poems preserve the 'coldest of corns' formula. See *Runic and Heroic*



itself. No two lexical items are truly synonymous, although they may be called so for convenience's sake. Even when the literal meaning is, to all intents, identical, two different words bring different connotations with them, different registers of formality or associations of domain, different etymological inferences and, of course, phonetics. In Anglo-Saxon variation, the appositional lists may appear mere padding (indeed variation may have originated in the context of oral composition to give the singer time to think and the audience time to register), but the result of the device is that significant alterations, developments and refinements are made to the base referent, which considerably enrich its semantic density and complexity. Similarly, although 'hailropes' and 'heavengravel' refer to the same weather phenomenon and 'wolfsnow' to something close, there is a lot of value added to these compounds: nautical paraphernalia; the kingdom of God; hard, abrasive stones and cruel beasts of battle; as well as a good deal of syntactic compression and rhythmic punch. As a simple sequence of variation on compound words for adverse weather conditions, these two lines of Hopkins pack in as much (though in different ways) as the best examples in *Beowulf* do.

#### General Remarks on Hopkins's Use of Compounds

It is apparent that many of Hopkins's compound words in 'The Loss of the Eurydice' are formed according to the same patterns as various common Anglo-Saxon compounds, and operate in the same way syntactically. In a number of instances there exist specific Anglo-Saxon compounds which have one or more of their elements in common with, and/or occupy a similar field of meaning as, Hopkins's coinages. It is possible that Hopkins may have formed his own compounds by analogy with these. In addition, Hopkins seems to have absorbed many of Marsh's remarks, in particular those about the

force of prefixes and the plastic power of compounds and their ability to transform the parts of speech.

The effects of this Saxonesque compounding are several. It has already been suggested that compounds appear to have a more purposeful relationship with their referents than many simplices do. They frequently name a thing by specifying its attributes, or its function. This is advantageous to Hopkins's poetic of individuating the inner form of material objects by making language as specific to its referent as possible. Compounds delay the arbitrary and the generalising in the act of naming. The syntactic compression achieved by virtue of compounding also offers Hopkins more flexibility regarding word order: an important gain when he imposes so many other limits on the verse from a phonetic point of view.

It is also apparent that the peculiarity of these Saxonised compounds (frequently highlighted by hyphenation) often arrests the reader's attention and temporarily disrupts the reading process. That these words are constructed according to native rules, and from native materials, allows the classically uneducated reader the possibility of solving the conundrum, which a loan-word compound might not. In most cases, the reader goes through an interpretative process of defamiliarisation, followed by a gradual refamiliarisation, like that gradual welcoming 'with double warmth' which Marsh describes being offered to those 'antiquated and half-forgotten native vocables' brought back to our remembrance. For Hopkins's ideal reader, the pay-off for completing this process of de- and re-familiarisation is a fresher and more insightful perception of the subject (although for the Anglo-Saxon audience the compounds were probably part of a

familiar poetic language: a student can find uses for a language which would not occur to a native speaker). In most instances, this aspect of Hopkins's Saxonising can be judged a success: the combinations are strange enough to give pause for thought, but usually transparent enough (through their construction from native elements) to be understood.

Sprung Rhythm: 'in full force in Anglo-Saxon verse'?

Hopkins's compounding is also of profound importance to his prosody. To attempt a definitive description of sprung rhythm is fraught with difficulty. No scholarly account of it is entirely satisfactory.<sup>127</sup> a state of affairs no doubt stemming in part from the fact that Hopkins's own sketchy accounts of it are less impressive than his actual practice. Presumably what the poet Hopkins heard and wrote intuitively, the educator Hopkins wished to clarify and explain, but did so with only partial success. What is clear, both from the evidence of the poems and what Hopkins has to say on the matter, is that sprung rhythm is accentual in nature and does not count unstressed syllables.<sup>128</sup> From his reading (of Marsh if no-one else), Hopkins would have known, long before he studied Anglo-Saxon in 1882, that such an accentual, primarily non-syllabic system existed in Anglo-Saxon. Given the relative unimportance of counting unstressed syllables, Hopkins's introduction of the idea of the foot into his prosody seems illogical, and it is at this point that I find his accounts of sprung rhythm unconvincing: presumably the Oxford 'Greats' man found it hard to give up entirely on the idea of the foot as the building block of analytic prosody.

<sup>127</sup> The most persuasive is still Harold Whitehall's, arguing that sprung rhythm is essentially dipodic. Harold Whitehall, 'Sprung Rhythm', in *Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*, pp. 28-54.

<sup>128</sup> See for example the account which Bridges later prefaced to the first and second editions of the poems; *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Robert Bridges and Charles Williams, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 3-6.

One might well ask in what way sprung rhythm is a regular metre at all, if it consists simply of a sequence of stressed syllables, separated by a completely variable number of unstressed syllables. Implicit in the poems and in Hopkins's explications, is that the line itself is the unit by which these stressed syllables are regularly measured. In 'The Loss of the Eurydice' stanza, the first, second and fourth lines are all of four-stresses (the third line has three). They have been called tetrameters, but this introduces the idea of the foot again. One can identify the four lifts in each line, but deciding in which 'foot' each unstressed syllable belongs is problematic.

This smácks of a fúdge.  
 A régular rhýthm should be héard,  
 Héard by the éar, not séen on a páge;  
 A blúrring of writing with spéech.  
 To define an acóustic périod by the méasure of a líne-  
 break is to confúse áural and vísual repetítion márk:  
 it suggésts you could táke ány thírty-two  
 Stréssed sýllables, and with them make a stánza of 'The Wréck of the  
 Déutschland'.

Hopkins's comments would seem to imply that this is exactly what can be done. This whole chapter could be scanned in order to find where its natural lifts fall and these could be laid into groups of 2, 3, 4, 3, 5, 5, 4 and 6 stresses per line (the number of dips between them being irrelevant), followed by a break before the pattern repeated itself. This organisation would not be perceptible to the ear and, read aloud, would sound exactly the same as it now stands in normal paragraphing. It would only make any difference to the eye.

It is something else which makes the thirty-two stresses of 'The Deutschland' stanza (thirty-three in the second part) into an aurally satisfying pattern. What in fact binds them into a regular measure is almost deafeningly obvious, although Hopkins seems never to

have been consciously aware of it (perhaps he took it for granted). The strong syllables are measured out by regularly recurring sound patterns, in this case an *ababcbca* rhyme scheme; although at times Hopkins's densely inter-woven multiple sound-patterns are much more complicated. The principle is the same as the regularly recurring alliterative bind of the Anglo-Saxon line, delineating a rhythmic unit. The fixed pattern of rhyme-to-number-of-stressed-syllables sets up a prosodic period which allows Hopkins to vary his total syllable count, altering the pace and insistence of the verse as is appropriate. The line division merely points up this relationship; accents per rhymed unit.

#### Compounding and Sprung Rhythm: a Saxonesque, but not Saxonist Relationship

Coining compound words excises many unstressed syllables (articles, prepositions and conjunctions), which would otherwise be necessary to render an idea in expanded syntax. In effect they help to keep Hopkins's sprung rhythm taut and punchy by stripping the verse back to the bones of the strong accents, and helping avoid too many long dips. In a letter to Dixon of 27 February 1879, Hopkins remarks: 'I shd. add that the word Sprung which I use for this rhythm means something like *abrupt* and applies by rights only where one stress follows another running, without syllable between'.<sup>129</sup> This attempt at definition is more pedantic than the one with which he prefaced his manuscript book, where we have the more familiar explanation of each 'foot' made up of one stress and between zero and four unstressed syllables.<sup>130</sup> Hopkins clearly believes that the defining characteristic of sprung rhythm, even if it is not consistently observed in every 'foot', is that two strong-stressed syllables may fall one after the other: something which cannot happen in strict metrical verse, unless by virtue of substitution or counterpoint, and even

<sup>129</sup> *Correspondence*, II, 23.

<sup>130</sup> Although he expands this by saying that 'for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used'. *Poems*, 2nd edn, p. 3.

then clashing lifts are not common. In a letter of 25 February 1878, Hopkins complains to Bridges that the regular pulsing on and off of common rhythm too often weakens the force of a phrase.<sup>131</sup> A more striking and forceful effect is produced by two consecutive stresses and compounding makes this effect more easily available.

Certain types of compounds become double stress groups, chief among them adjectival combinations with participles as second-words.<sup>132</sup> 'Bristol-bred' is an example, although because the first element is a disyllabic word, the accents do not fall in juxtaposition in the 'sprung' fashion. An example where double stress does occur consecutively is 'seaswill'.<sup>133</sup> The emphatic effect of these two, blunt monosyllables serves to bring the reader to a deliberate pause at the end of its verse period. Such a rhythmic figure would be highly unusual in accentual-syllabic metre and also impossible in non-compound form ('the swill of the sea'). Sprung rhythm and compounded vocabulary work hand in glove.

While certain compounds are double-stressed, it is far more frequent for them to exhibit forestress. For example 'wolf' and 'snow' both take full stress independently, but together as 'wolfsnow', the determinant takes full stress and the determinatum is weakened, its accent being partly subsumed by the gravitational pull of its head-stem.<sup>134</sup> The majority of the nominal and adjectival two-element compounds in 'The Eurydice' are of this stress pattern, as are the majority of Anglo-Saxon compounds. This phonetic by-product of word-combining essentially means that Hopkins can fit more into his sprung line. As they are normally the most significant parts of a sentence, it is primarily nouns

<sup>131</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, p. 46.

<sup>132</sup> See Marchand, *English Word-Formation*, 2.1.16 and pp. 20-30 in general.

<sup>133</sup> If the hyphen were removed, the word might (and eventually would) be pronounced only with first-syllable stress, due to assimilation.

<sup>134</sup> See Marchand, *English Word-Formation*, 2.1.13 to 2.1.21 for a detailed analysis of the conditions under which forestress is likely to occur.



and adjectives (followed by verbs) which carry the main stress in English. If Hopkins introduced every nominal idea as a simplex his line would quickly fill to its maximum number of stresses before being marked off by the rhyme. A 'gush of death' would fill two of the stresses in his four-stress line instead of the one which 'deathgush' occupies, leaving space for a further epithet, 'brown'. If the cloud were both 'bald' and 'bright' instead of 'baldbright', there would be no room in the line for 'beetling'. Of course, the same idea could be run over into the next line. Each stanza would push on at less of a pace, but the length of the poem could be increased to include all the same lexical information, or the number of stressed syllables per line could be increased. Yet Hopkins achieves a lexically dense stanza while at the same time preserving the integrity of his tight rhythmical period. The way in which he crams as much as possible into his sprung period by coining compound words can be likened to the well-documented way in which he progressively tries to fit more and more into the sonnet-form by lengthening the lines in some of his later sonnets.

In fact, with these forestressed compounds Hopkins manages to have things both ways. For while the second element does not constitute a full stress, and therefore does not figure in the reckoning of the measure, neither has it become a completely unstressed syllable, as have most prepositions and pronouns. 'Boys', 'bright', 'ropes', 'white' and several of the other second elements possess reduced, or secondary, stress. In these compounds almost the same degree of punch possessed by two juxtaposed, fully-stressed syllables is audible, but within the rhythmical economy just described.

### Anglo-Saxon Themes

In concentrating on those aspects of the Anglo-Saxon language which Hopkins found useful, the possibility that he was drawn to Anglo-Saxon literature because of its content may have been overlooked. In the nineteenth century Alfred was popularly held to be the father of the English navy and much later Ezra Pound was attracted by the 'English national chemical' he claimed to have discovered in *The Seafarer*. Certainly the theme of the sea and sea travel is pervasive in both Anglo-Saxon poetry and Hopkins's verse. Frequently Hopkins exhibits the same mixture of fascination and morbidity which characterises the attitude of Anglo-Saxon *scops* to the sea.<sup>135</sup>

We might also speculate that the Jesuit poet who bemoans 'the state of fast foundering' of Protestant Britain, and who worried that Purcell would be damned for being a Protestant<sup>136</sup> might well be interested in early England because it was Catholic England. The God of Cædmon's creation hymn, despite the endeavours of sixteenth and seventeenth-century antiquarians to prove otherwise, was obviously the God of Catholicism. John Lingard's *History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (used at Stonyhurst for refectory readings while Hopkins was there), is written from a Catholic perspective. Traces of such an interest are perceptible in Hopkins's poetry: there are the fragments of a projected long work on the early British Saint, Winefred, and 'The Eurydice' refers to the mediaeval pilgrim's route Walsingham Way, which led to a shrine

<sup>135</sup> Describing Marcus Hare as 'care-drowned and wrapped in / Cheer's death' seems to be very much in sympathy with the sentiment and tone of *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. This aspect of Anglo-Saxon poetry was frequently commented on. Longfellow writes how the people rejoiced in sea-storms ('Anglo-Saxon Literature', p. 95). See also Henry Morley, *A First Sketch of English Literature*, 8th edn (London: Cassell, 1873, 1896), which focuses on maritime kennings and the hardships of sea as subject matter (pp. 21 & 29).

<sup>136</sup> *Letters to Bridges*, p. 170.

dedicated to the Virgin Mary.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, these interests remain subsidiary to Hopkins's investment in Anglo-Saxon philology.

Anglo-Saxon: Nearer to Adamic Naming, Nearer to Babel?

Implicit in Hopkins's linguistic primitivism, founded on Anglo-Saxon etymology, is the desire for what might be termed 'motivational' language, for a fundamental, rather than an arbitrary, relationship between a word and the object it denotes: one in which the referent's presence is concretely (and sacramentally) immanent in the sign. It is this that Hopkins's 'heightening' of language desires to achieve: a desire which also fuels the philologists' search for roots, Ur-words whose referents are vividly alive and which reinvigorate thought and language if their original meanings are recovered. The wish to see language brought into an immediate and intimate proximity with things lies behind Hopkins's endless etymological enquiries in his journal, and underpins his whole poetic.

Sharpening every blunt, taken-for-granted item of vocabulary into a living metaphor also informs the coining of compound words. If the sea is called 'the sea', it appears to be an empty sign, a counter of common currency which passes from speaker to speaker and is decoded effortlessly. In Saussurean linguistics, it makes no intellectual difference whether the sign is 'pea' or 'saw', as long as it is accepted by all. If, however, the sea is newly called 'the whale's-path', a more concrete, direct relationship between the word and the referent is suggested, at least to the modern reader (as already mentioned, it may have been a poetic convention for its original audience). It forces one to picture an image of the sea, to consider an aspect of the sea, what it provides and for what. Similarly

<sup>137</sup> See also 'To what serves Mortal Beauty?', which refers to Bede's story of Pope Gregory sending a Christian mission to Anglo-Saxon England after being attracted by Anglians in the slave-market of Rome. Poem no. 62 in *Poems*, 4th edn, p. 98.

'heaven-gravel' interferes with the everyday, one-to-one conversion of signifier to signified and imposes something of the physical fact of the referent upon the reader/listener. These compounds appear to have a more concrete purchase on the things they attempt to define, in the same way that Hopkins prefers the transparency of Celtic place names over his own. To a Saussurean this semblance is misleading: the two elements of a compound are themselves arbitrary and with frequent usage their combination will become familiar enough not to provoke any such intervention in the act of interpretation. One can never invent a sign which will be an adequate substitute for the entire presence of an object, one is simply deferring the inevitable arbitrariness of the sign.

Hopkins would not have admitted this ultimate arbitrariness: it is the linguistic equivalent of atheism.<sup>138</sup> Using both his Saxonised word-hoard and his Saxonesque compounds, he attempts to define things more specifically and more vividly. Pushing for the closest correspondence possible between word and world, he attempts to be hyper-referential. The purpose of making language familiarly strange is to refresh the strength of the perceptions made through language. This radical mimesis, shocking the audience into reading as if for the first time, seems to me a specifically modernist writing strategy. The similarities between aspects of Hopkins's technique and Pound's poetic of the ideogram, for instance, are striking. A Chinese character, which consists of four signs for material objects, all a shade of red, is praised by Pound for its direct treatment of the abstract concept of 'redness'.<sup>139</sup> In principle, this is no different from the Anglo-Saxon compound as championed by Marsh and amplified by Hopkins. By interrogating the supposedly

<sup>138</sup> Nor is it an unshakeable truth of linguistics, although to question the arbitrary nature of the sign is almost heretical in the current climate.

<sup>139</sup> Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber, 1951), pp. 21-2.

abstract, western conception 'red', defining some of its qualities by reference to specific and concrete examples, the language of 'redness' appears to be more vivid, more accurate and closer to the external world. This probing of conventions in order to bring language into a tighter, Emersonian bind with its subject-matter characterises both Pound's and Hopkins's poetics.

As with many modernist writers, the radically mimetic qualities of Hopkins's writing can have the effect of concentrating the reader's attention on the vehicle of language itself, rather than travelling beyond it to the object of reference.<sup>140</sup> Language is made so strange that sometimes the reader never refamiliarizes, and words themselves become the primary object of interest, rather than what they say.<sup>141</sup> Hopkins's poetry brings itself to the brink of a slope which leads towards such a condition, one which culminates in *Finnegans Wake*, where a virtue is made of it.

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<sup>140</sup> Roman Jakobson sees this as the essential problem that Hopkins's poetry deals with. See Roman Jakobson, 'What is Poetry?', in *Selected Writings*, ed. by S. Rudy, 6 vols (The Hague: Mouton, 1981), III, 740-50.

<sup>141</sup> As, for example, with 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection', where the linguistic surface is so dazzling that the reader may be distracted from its meaning. *Poems*, 4th edn, pp. 105-6.

### **'Banging up the Big-Bazoo': Pound's uses of Anglo-Saxon**

It is commonly supposed that Pound's relationship with Anglo-Saxon poetry was more a flirtation than a life-long commitment. His translation of *The Seafarer* is famous, but even those sympathetic to its methods tend to see it as a phase, one of the many Browning-esque masks he abandons as he matures.<sup>1</sup> Stylistically, the ghost of 'The Seafarer'<sup>2</sup> is briefly resurrected in 'Canto I', but, this apart, it is assumed to be more or less a dead-end in Pound's career. The enduring influences on Pound are felt to be Provençal Troubadour poetry and Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Yet Pound is fundamentally a mediaevalizing modernist and Anglo-Saxon plays a significant role in his conception of mediaeval literature.<sup>4</sup> In particular, it will be shown that Pound's understanding of Anglo-Saxon is entirely in sympathy with the central features of his mature poetic and is used throughout his long poem, *The Cantos*, not merely at its beginning.

#### Pound's Background in Anglo-Saxon

Fred Robinson has demonstrated that, far from being a dilettante at Anglo-Saxon, Pound had been engaged in serious study of the literature, and had made similar literary

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Kenner says that Pound's enthusiasm for Anglo-Saxon studies led to his translation of *The Seafarer*, 'used once again, explicitly as archaism, in Canto I [...] and thereafter abandoned'. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 2nd edn (London: Pimlico, 1971, 1991), pp. 108-9.

<sup>2</sup> The title of the Anglo-Saxon poem will be italicized, while Pound's translation is placed in quotation marks.

<sup>3</sup> In 1986, Beatrice Ricks's bibliography listed three monographs and a microfilm on the role of Chinese in *The Cantos*, three monographs on the influence of Provence and the Troubadours, and scores of articles on both subjects. Beatrice Ricks, *Ezra Pound: a bibliography of secondary works* (Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1986). Work is continually added to these areas, e.g. *Ezra Pound and the Troubadours*, ed. by Philip Grover (Gardonne: fédérop, 2000). By comparison, only a handful of articles have dealt with 'The Seafarer' and there is no book on Pound's use of early English. If Middle English is also taken into account, there is more than enough material for such a book.

<sup>4</sup> Gugelberger realises this, although his main focus is not Anglo-Saxon. Georg Gugelberger, *Ezra Pound's Medievalism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1978).



experiments, long before translating *The Seafarer*.<sup>5</sup> As Robinson's discoveries are still little-known in Britain, it is worth summarising them here. Pound studied Anglo-Saxon with Professor Joseph D. Ibbotson ('Bib') at Hamilton College, New York, 1904-1905. Pound was a talented student and a college yearbook refers to him as 'Bib's pride'.<sup>6</sup> Among Pound's early papers at the Yale University archive, Robinson has found a previously unpublished thirteen-line poem called 'Caedmon', which alludes to Caedmon's 'Hymn', seems to ascribe authorship of *The Dream of the Rood* to Caedmon, and mentions the 'seven kingdoms broad' of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy.<sup>7</sup> Several unpublished letters to his parents refer to his studies during this period. He writes to his mother that he finds 'Anglo-Saxon very fascinating', that he is translating Alfred's account of the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan and he mentions Cynewulf and *Beowulf*. In a letter of 13 February 1905, he reports to have started *Beowulf* and writes: 'If Dad can find a copy of *Beowulf* edited by A. J. Wyatt, published by Cambridge Press, please send right away [...] No other edition wanted'.<sup>8</sup> Among the college papers Robinson also finds a seventeen-line translation made from part of a charm in Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*;<sup>9</sup> a fragment about 'the rumbling line / That runic letters twine / In Saxon minstrelsy'; odd lines of juvenilia expressing the desire to leave dry land and go to sea (reminiscent of *The Seafarer*); and heavily alliterative, accentual verse in archaic

<sup>5</sup> Fred C. Robinson, '“The Might of the North”: Pound's Anglo-Saxon Studies and “The Seafarer”', *Yale Review*, 71 (1982), 199-224.

<sup>6</sup> This epithet is given beneath Pound's photograph in *The Hamiltonian* (1905). Cited in Charles Norman, *Ezra Pound: a biography*, 2nd edn (London: Macdonald, 1960, 1969), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, 'Might of the North', p. 201. Robinson also finds four lines of a poem about the 'Gods of the North', dated 1902, and speculates that Pound may have first encountered Anglo-Saxon on a course in 'English Language and Analysis' taken when a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania. While I spell 'Caedmon', Pound uses 'Caedmon'.

<sup>8</sup> This is the same Wyatt with whom William Morris collaborated on 'The Tale of Beowulf'.

<sup>9</sup> The full text has twenty-nine lines. Sweet simply numbers the charm 'II'. *An Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, ed. by Henry Sweet, 7th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), pp. 104-5. Calling his translation 'Fragment / From an ANGLO-SAXON CHARM', Pound begins his translation with the second line: *Hlude wæran hy, la hlude, ða hy ofer þone hlæw ridan*, which he translates: 'Loud were they, loud, as over the hill they rode'. Pound includes an untranslated phrase, *mihtigan wif* ('powerful women'), which he uses to gloss his 'witch women'. Robinson, 'Might of the North', pp. 205-6.

From further documentary evidence at the Pound Archive, Robinson has gleaned that this interest continued unabated after Hamilton College. There survive undated notes for a projected translation of *The Wanderer*:

So saith the plausible in mind, sat him apart at  
(rune  
(counsel  
(mystery<sup>12</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The librarians of the Beinecke Library at Yale have kindly supplied me with a photocopy of this article, which I have edited and included as appendix III. In 'The Music of Beowulf', Pound writes 'For twenty years thereabouts I have had in my head a few fragments of anglo-saxon: Hlude waeron hy la hulde'. If the 'twenty years thereabouts' is at all accurate, Pound must be writing around 1925 (having first read the charm while at Hamilton). He probably transcribed the first fourteen lines of *Beowulf* at the same time, for the essay is primarily concerned with trying to match those opening lines of *Beowulf* to the tune of a Hebridean folk song.

translation of *The Seafarer*.<sup>16</sup> Pound's copy (now at the University of Texas) is apparently heavily annotated, particularly the text of *The Seafarer*, and there are brackets around lines 15-18 of *The Wanderer*, which Pound quotes in his 1916 essay, 'The Constant Preaching to the Mob'.<sup>17</sup> In this copy, Pound also cites Stopford Brooke's *History of Early English Literature*, which leads Robinson to conclude that Pound used this work at Hamilton: Robinson also notes how Brooke's summary of *The Husband's Message* is very like Pound's sentimental 'At the Heart O' Me', and he attributes Pound's sub-title, 'A. D. 751', to the fact that Brooke dates *The Husband's Message* to roughly the middle of the eighth century.<sup>18</sup>

#### Stopford Brooke as a Possible Secondary Source

From this bibliographic reference, it seems likely that Brooke's *History* was recommended secondary reading for Ibbotson's students. It would be surprising if 'Bib's pride' did not actually follow up this reference, although the debt of 'At the Heart O' Me' to Brooke's *History* could be accounted for if Ibbotson reported Brooke's views in class. Brooke makes his own translations of many Anglo-Saxon poems or extracts. His style is not dissimilar to Pound's 'Seafarer', and the preface to *The History of Early English Literature* is, in part, an apology for, and theory of, translation.<sup>19</sup> Brooke holds that the accuracy of a poetic translation must be measured not only by its fidelity to the sense of the original, but also to the rhythm and music of the original: 'of all possible translations

<sup>15</sup> In the late 1950s, Pound also wrote 'Wyatt' on the cover of a pad of notes for *Confucius to Cummings*. Robinson assumes this is again the Wyatt who edited *Beowulf*, but it is more likely to be Thomas Wyatt, who was included in the finished anthology.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, 'Might of the North', p. 211. It is likely that this was Pound's primary textbook as a student, for it also contains Alfred's account of the Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan, Bede's account of Cædmon and the 'hlude' charm.

<sup>17</sup> *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), pp. 64-5.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, 'Might of the North', p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson does not deal with Brooke's preface. What follows is original research.

of poetry, a merely prose translation is the most inaccurate'.<sup>20</sup> Reiteration strongly emphasizes this point:

I felt that the translation should be in a rhythm which should represent, as closely as I could make it, the movement and the variety of the original verse. A prose translation, even when it reaches excellence, gives no idea whatever of that to which the ancient English listened. The original form is destroyed, and with it our imagination of the world to which the poet sang, of the way he thought, of how he shaped his emotion. Prose no more represents poetry than architecture does music. Translations of poetry are never much good, but at least they should always endeavour to have the musical movement of poetry, and to obey the laws of the verse they translate. (I, ix)

A similar belief underlies Pound's whole practice of translation, not just his version of *The Seafarer*. That this principle may have been planted in Pound's twenty year-old mind by Brooke is supported by Brooke's assertion that 'the translations here given are as accurate as I could make them. I do not mean that there are no mistakes in them, - which would be an insolence I should soon repent, - but I mean that there is nothing out of my own fancy added to the translation' (I, viii). Pound, who has often been accused of making mistakes, asserted that his translation of *The Seafarer* was 'as nearly literal, I think, as any translation can be'.<sup>21</sup> an outrageous claim if one believes that translation should render the sense accurately and in contemporary idiom, but defensible if endeavouring 'to have the musical movement of poetry, and to obey the laws of the verse they translate'.<sup>22</sup>

Before considering 'The Seafarer', it is worth quoting a little more of Brooke. Many of the views expressed in his *History* are *zeitgeistlich*, and indicative of ideas and opinions any attentive student of the subject may have encountered around the turn of the century,

<sup>20</sup> Stopford A. Brooke, *The History of Early English Literature*, 2 vols (London, Macmillan, 1892), I, p. viii. Further references in the main body of the text.

<sup>21</sup> From 'I gather the Limbs of Osiris', in Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973), pp. 21-43 (p. 39).

<sup>22</sup> Brooke continues with an accurate, if incomplete, description of Anglo-Saxon metre and advocates the use of a predominantly trochaic movement and impressionistic, rather than rigidly faithful alliteration for translating Anglo-Saxon poetry (I, pp. x-xii).

whether or not they digested Brooke's *History* whole. At the start of the first chapter one reads that:

"Widsith told his tale, unlocked his word-hoard," is the beginning of the earliest poem we possess in the English tongue. *Widsith* - that is, "the Far-Traveller" - may be the actual name of the writer, or a name which as a wandering poet he assumed. (I, 1)

No scholar would now dare to make such a claim for *Widsith* (although all would agree that it is very early), but the impression such a statement might make on a young, historically-minded poet should not be underestimated. Brooke claims to begin his book with the first line of the first poem in the English language. Pound, determined to master every aspect of the craft of poetry from its very beginnings, was a poet for whom origins had particular fascination. Not only is this line the apparent fountainhead of poetry in English, but it enacts its own coming-over into articulation, its violation of silence, its unlocking of a language, with the potential for discovery of hidden treasures.

Brooke continues to describe *Widsith* and its narrator in ways which resonate for a reader of *The Cantos* and, one suspects, for its future author. This wandering *scop* (as much the roaming minstrel as any troubadour), catalogues the great men he has known, names kings and rulers and the people they ruled over:

In this fashion he became the travelling geographer and historian, the bringer of news, the man who, by singing the great deeds of warriors in various lands, knit together by a common bond of admiration the heroes of diverse peoples, and made the great stories the common property of the Teutonic tribes. (I, 7)

It seems that *Widsith* is 'a poem including history', 'the tale of the tribe'.<sup>23</sup> Pound, a future 'far-traveller' already infected with wanderlust, and who, in a few years, would be footing his way through Spain, Italy and France towards London, learnt of *Widsith* around the same time he later claimed to have first conceived of *The Cantos*, in conversation with

<sup>23</sup> The first phrase is Pound's definition of an epic, made in *Social Credit: An Impact* (1930) and cited by William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 2nd edn (London: Anvil, 1985, 2001), p. xxiv.



his Anglo-Saxon professor.<sup>24</sup> What is more, this itinerant singer not only makes art out of the deeds of kings, but he enters into a pact of social responsibility with those kings. He is honoured, respected and rewarded in the courts he visits, in return for which he records the princes' acts and propagates their reputation. Brooke notes the rulers' dependence on the *scop*, arguing 'even great kings are but little, he [Widsith] thinks, without their singer. In his hands their history lies and their honour' (I, 6). Despite Pound's youthful infatuation with nineties' aestheticism, the social function of the writer was an ideal, perhaps planted around this time, that Pound aspired to throughout most of his long career.<sup>25</sup> Certainly the acknowledgement and respect which Widsith earns from kings and heroes was something Pound thought he deserved and craved for all his life.

Yet another of Brooke's remarks may have caught Pound's imagination.:

the passion for roving, for adventure, which is keen above all other nations in the people of our island, makes this poem representative of the English. [...] It is the true description of a common type of Englishman in every period of our history. (I, 6)

This may be the germ of Pound's buccaneer boast that he had found 'the English national chemical' in *The Seafarer*.<sup>26</sup> Direct borrowing or not, it illustrates that Pound's almost anthropological pronouncement on the Anglo-Saxon poem was not without precedent.

On the same page of his *History*, Brooke writes 'Widsith is our Ulysses': Homer and

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Pound borrowed the second phrase from Kipling to describe *The Cantos*. Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938), p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> In the late 1930s, when asked to contribute something to the Hamilton Alumni Review, Pound wrote: 'as Hamilton ITEM, might record that the CANTOS started in a talk with 'Bib'.' Cited in Norman, *Ezra Pound*, p. 356. Hugh Kenner notes that starting *The Cantos* with a highly Saxonised poem can be read as a gesture of homage to Pound's Anglo-Saxon teacher, Ibbotson. Kenner, *Pound Era*, p. 354.

<sup>25</sup> See Kung's remarks in 'Canto XIII': 'And "When the prince has gathered about him / All the savants and artists, his riches will be fully employed."' Ezra Pound, *Cantos* (London: Faber, 1990), p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> From *The New Age*, 14 November 1912, p. 33, cited in Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, p. 68. The claim is repeated and extended to include 'The Wanderer', in *Patria Mia*, written in 1913, and first published in American in 1950. Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and The Treatise on Harmony* (London: Peter Owen, 1962), p. 45. The idea was also *zeitgeistlich* and the Victorians took pride in tracing their global supremacy of the waves back to Alfred, 'the father of the English navy'. See also W. P. Ker, who compares the Angles and Saxons to both Ulysses and Sir Francis Drake. W. P. Ker, *Medieval English Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), p. 19.



Anglo-Saxon called into conjunction on a college course some thirteen years before the Ur-‘Canto I’ (1917).<sup>27</sup>

### The Defence of ‘The Seafarer’

Ur-‘Canto I’ had its own prototype in ‘The Seafarer’, first published in *The New Age*, in 1911, reprinted in *Ripostes* (1912) and again in *Cathay* (1915).<sup>28</sup> Lengthy and fierce battles of literary journalism and criticism have been fought over ‘The Seafarer’ and the war was finally won by Michael Alexander and Fred Robinson, although prejudice against Pound, both general and as a translator of Anglo-Saxon is still common and it is necessary to defend his competence in this respect.<sup>29</sup>

Alexander unshackled discussion of ‘The Seafarer’ from the simple question of its philological accuracy. Pound aims ‘to translate the spirit rather than the letter’, in order to capture a sense of what reading the original is like.<sup>30</sup> The alliterative measure Pound uses is impressionistic, but sufficient to energise the poem’s utterance. Its syntax (as with the original), does not make it easy to read, but it does convey the flavour of the original to those who are linguistically ill-equipped to read the original. With this as the primary objective of ‘The Seafarer’, it is understandable that priority is sometimes given to

<sup>27</sup> What is now ‘Canto I’ had originally formed the latter part of ‘Canto III’ when ‘Three Cantos’ (begun in 1915), were published in *Poetry*, August 1917. See Peter Brooker, *A Student’s Guide to The Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1979), p. 237. For more on the ‘Ur-Cantos’, see *Variorum Edition of ‘Three Cantos’: A Prototype*, ed. by Richard Taylor (Bayreuth: Boomerang Press, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Brooker, *Student’s Guide*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> The most negative reactions came from Kenneth Sisam, in his letter to *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1954, p. 409. The ensuing controversy raged in the letters’ page until 20 August and Sisam’s attack on Pound’s ‘errors’ coloured critical responses to the translation for years after. See Donald Davie’s 1964 work *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor*, reprinted in *Studies in Ezra Pound: Chronicle and Polemic* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), pp. 11-209 (p. 28); also Hugh Witemeyer, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal, 1908-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 119-20. Alexander’s vindication of Pound’s methods in ‘The Seafarer’ is found in *The Poetic Achievement*, pp. 66-79. Fred Robinson’s convincing explanation of Pound’s scholarly approaches can be found in ‘The Might of the North’, cited above.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, p. 67.

rendering sound over semantics. So Alexander defends the translation of *blæd* as 'blade' (not 'glory'), an appropriate synecdoche for glory in heroic society,<sup>31</sup> and no doubt as deliberate as the mistranslation of *englum* as 'Angles' (i.e. 'English'), rather than 'Angels', which Pound acknowledges in his note to the translation.<sup>32</sup>

Alexander also suggested that Pound's dismissal of the final part of *The Seafarer* as a 'platitudinous address to the Deity' (he does not translate anything after line 99a, and removes other Christian references), is a logical extension of the analytic methods of textual criticism practised by contemporary scholars.<sup>33</sup> Three years later, building on Alexander's observation, Fred Robinson demonstrated that many of Pound's choices in translating *The Seafarer* were made on the basis of the best scholarship available to him. Radically, Robinson argues that almost every one of Pound's renderings, including the infamous howlers, are entirely defensible when considered in this light. In Sweet's glosses and notes, and in the contemporary editions of the Clark-Hall dictionary, Robinson finds a number of unusual variant spellings, meanings and forms of words. Consistently, these variations provide ample justification for Pound's choices. Thus, for *byrig* Pound encountered two possibilities: the first, 'town', is the 'correct' translation according to Sisam and other detractors, the second meaning is 'mulberry', which Pound has written into the margin of his copy of Sweet and which he uses in his translation.<sup>34</sup> It seems that Pound has done his homework. In point of fact, only the meticulous student of

<sup>31</sup> Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, p. 73 (more examples on p. 74). Interestingly, although surely accidentally, a similar reassessment of the relative value of sound and semantics is being made contemporaneously in continental Europe by the Dadaists: 'The Seafarer' as a sound poem is a gross oversimplification of its impact on the reader, but not entirely inaccurate for all that.

<sup>32</sup> Appended to the text in the *New Age*. See Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, pp. 75-6 and Brooker, *Student's Guide*, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, pp. 72 & 76.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, 'The Might of the North', pp. 211 & 218. Robinson also finds excellent contemporary evidence for Pound's translation of *thurh* as 'tomb' (and not 'through') and *stearn* as 'stern' (not 'tern' or 'sea-bird'), pp. 217-20.

Anglo-Saxon could come up with some of Pound's 'mistakes': it is the competent but slapdash student who takes the first offering of the dictionary and hurries to the next word of the puzzle. Pound's deliberations have resulted in some decidedly idiosyncratic choices, which few later students of the poem might agree with, but his methodology is not as misguided as was once supposed. He is bold and unconventional, rather than careless.

### Homer and 'The Seafarer'

In criticism of 'The Seafarer', there has been no advance on Alexander and Robinson's work.<sup>35</sup> It is conventional, however, to mention the relationship of 'The Seafarer' to 'Canto I'. *The Cantos* are frequently described as a voyage, or a journey into knowledge. This sailing after wisdom acquired through experience, enduring many hardships along the way, also fits Pound's 'Seafarer', and may explain his attraction both to this poem and *The Wanderer*. It could even be said that the difficulty Pound has in accepting the (supposedly 'added') Christian resolution of these poems is consistent with how any Dantean Paradise remains unrealisable at the end of *The Cantos*. Furthermore, the speaker of Pound's translation (as well as Pound) feels himself to be an exile from the material and social comforts of his homeland and society, as does Odysseus-Ulysses, who will become one of the unifying characters of 'The Cantos', inviting us aboard at the poem's very beginning. Finally, the sound of the sea, practised at in 'The Seafarer', almost becomes a voice itself in *The Cantos*, often presaging important thematic or structural shifts within the poem.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Nothing useful is added by Burton Raffel, *The Art of Translating Poetry* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), pp. 159-65; or Melvin D. McNichols, 'Survivals and (re)Newals: Pound's "The Seafarer"', *Paideuma*, 20 (1991), 113-27.

<sup>36</sup> In the mid 1950s, Pound dictated notes on the structure of *The Cantos* to James Laughlin. He divides the poem into three categories 'a) What is there – permanent – the sea. / b) What is recurrent – the voyages / c)

Pound first mentioned the specific relationship between 'The Seafarer' and 'Canto I' in a letter to Iris Barry of 1916, in which he says 'I have tried an adaptation [of book XI of the *Odyssey*] in the "Seafarer" metre, or something like it, but I don't expect anyone to recognize the source very quickly'.<sup>37</sup> Given this remark it is not surprising that the majority who deal with 'The Seafarer' treat it merely as a rhythmical rehearsal for 'Canto I'. Without 'Canto I', Pound's 'Seafarer' would be something of a literary dead-end. 'The Seafarer' may be a successful approximation of what reading the original is like for those who cannot, but it is abstruse, eccentric and archaic, if regarded as a stand-alone poem. I would argue that Pound's version can hardly stand on its own at all. Being less independent from its parent text than most poetic translations are, its power and fascination lies almost entirely in its co-dependence on the original, and the reader's knowledge that such an original poem exists. However, as the Ur form of Ur-'Canto III' (itself the prototype of 'Canto I'), 'The Seafarer' takes on the status of a missing poetic link. To grasp the way Pound is working on his translation, is to achieve a purchase on the way he is at work on the far more engaging and significant overture of his long poem (although 'Canto I' is not the end of his use of Anglo-Saxon *poesis*).

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What is trivial – the casual – Vasco's troops weary, stupid parts'. *Poetry*, January 1982, cited in Cookson, *Guide to the Cantos*, p. xxvii. Pound seems to have put great store by a writer's understanding of the sea: 'Virgil came to life again in 1514 partly or possibly because Gavin Douglas knew the sea better than Virgil had'. Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber, 1951), p. 45. Stopford Brooke wrote that 'no natural object engaged [Anglo-Saxon poets] so much as the Sea, and for no object have they so many names. Their treatment of it in verse deserves a chapter in a history of English poetry'. He obliges in his *History of Early English Literature*, I, 223-57 (p. 223).

<sup>37</sup> Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters 1907-1941*, ed. by D. D. Paige (London: Faber, 1950), p. 87.

### Rhythms of 'The Seafarer'

It is necessary to identify what it is that Pound is practising in 'The Seafarer' and polishing in 'Canto I'.<sup>38</sup> Commentators have often become so involved with alliteration and the 'rules' which govern its use in Anglo-Saxon poetry, that they have made little headway with the rhythm of Pound's two poems. There are three important rhythmical features which Pound picks up from 'The Seafarer', but before describing them, it is worth clearing up the matter of his use of alliteration. The most important rule-of-thumb in Anglo-Saxon alliteration is that the third stressed syllable should normally alliterate with one or other, or both, of the first and second stressed syllables. This principle, outlined in paragraph 357 on page lxxxv of Pound's copy of Sweet's *Reader*, is frequently transgressed in 'The Seafarer' and 'Canto I'. Christine Brooke-Rose censures Pound for this:

Without actually obeying the complicated Anglo-Saxon rules of scansion (which would be undesirable in modern English and in fact impossible), it contrives nevertheless to remain close enough for absurdity, bringing in as well some serious faults such as alliterating on the fourth stress (which in Anglo-Saxon was always left non-alliterating, as a kind of neutral ground towards the next line); or alliterating on the same sound two lines running, or alliterating on one sound in the first half-line and on another, twice, in the second; all of which faults exaggerate the alliteration and produce an effect of heaviness.<sup>39</sup>

Either imitating Anglo-Saxon alliteration exactly is undesirable and impossible, or it is not: Pound cannot be criticised for introducing 'serious faults' by transgressing the norms of Anglo-Saxon metre if it is also believed that it is desirable for the poet-translator to transgress for the sake of modern idiom. Furthermore, if heaviness is a fault, surely three alliterating syllables in each line are heavier than two separate pairs of sounds (*aa bb*)? Yet the pattern *aa ab* is perfectly regular in Anglo-Saxon and reproduced frequently by Pound (e.g. lines 10 and 15, 'Chill its chains are; chafing sighs' and 'Weathered the

<sup>38</sup> I intend to concentrate on those aspects of 'The Seafarer' which have been neglected. The main purpose is to demonstrate the uses of 'The Seafarer' in *The Cantos*.

<sup>39</sup> Christine Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1971), pp. 86-7.



winter, wretched outcast').<sup>40</sup> However, Brooke-Rose slightly misses the point. In Anglo-Saxon poetry alliteration is a functional device used to mark the stressed syllables. It clarifies the scansion of the line. The reason the alliteration in 'The Seafarer' is exaggerated and produces an effect of heaviness, is not because Pound alliterates on the wrong stressed syllables, but because he does not stick to using the device with this functional purpose.<sup>41</sup> Lines 58 to 60 illustrate this effectively:

So that but now my heart burst from my breastlock,  
My mood 'mid the mere-flood,  
Over the whale's acre, would wander wide.

It is true that there is something faintly absurd in the archaism, the inversion, the strain placed on the modern English kenning 'whale's acre', and the slightly portentous, volitional use of the modal 'would'.<sup>42</sup> Yet the heaviness here is due not to misapplied rules of alliteration, but to an over-zealousness on Pound's part whereby the lines are over-loaded with decorative alliteration on several of the unstressed syllables. It is hard to give 'but' the intended stress ('now' is the natural first stressed syllable to my ear), yet

<sup>40</sup> All references to 'The Seafarer' are from Ezra Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, (London: Faber, 1984), pp. 64-6. Pound innovates on this pattern by reversing it (*ab bb*) in several lines (e.g. line 13 'That he on dry land loveliest liveth,'). Another, apparently unprecedented step which Pound takes, and for which Brooke-Rose does not take him to task, is in a number of lines (I count three) which employ an alliterative measure of *aa aa* (lines 48, 80 and 98: 'Bosque taketh blossom, cometh beauty of berries,'; 'Delight 'mid the doughty. / Days little durable,'; 'His born brothers, their buried bodies').

<sup>41</sup> In fact, some of the 'illegal' permutations Brooke-Rose cites occur often enough in the surviving corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry for some scholars to wonder how 'illegal' they were. Line 1016 of *Beowulf* appears to alliterate on the fourth syllable, in the pattern *ab ab*. Donald Scragg claims that in one in fifteen lines of *Beowulf*, the fourth stressed syllables alliterates with stressed syllables in the following line. He believes the effect of such lines is 'to sweep the listener forward across both metrical and syntactic boundaries'. Donald G. Scragg, 'The nature of Old English verse', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 55-70 (p.62).

<sup>42</sup> The archaic diction and mock-mediaevalism of Pound's 'Seafarer' probably owes something to William Morris, an early enthusiasm of Pound's. For an account of the young Pound passionately reciting 'The Haystack in the Floods' to H. D., see Hilda Doolittle, *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound by H. D.*, ed. by Norman Pearson and Michael King (Manchester: Carcanet, 1980), p. 23. Given Pound's interest in Anglo-Saxon and Morris, it is quite possible that he consulted Morris's 'The Tale of Beowulf', perhaps in the reading room of the British Library. There is no evidence for this, although the similarities in method and result of Morris's 'Beowulf' and Pound's 'Seafarer' are striking. Fred Robinson takes it for granted that 'Morris was certainly a great influence on Pound' in this respect. Fred Robinson, 'Ezra Pound and the Old English Translational Tradition', in *The Tomb of Beowulf and other essays on Old English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 259-74 (p. 272).



Pound has added it to his line without authority from the original text.<sup>43</sup> It is the need for a /b/ which has seduced him. His decision to retain Anglo-Saxon *mid* with the archaic abbreviation of its modern English derivative, instead of using the more idiomatic 'with', or 'along with', is motivated by the same desire to load the line with /m/ sounds, regardless of whether they fall in stressed or unstressed positions.<sup>44</sup> Other instances are plentiful (the 'full' in 'In icy feathers; full oft the eagle screamed' is an unnecessary excess of /f/s).<sup>45</sup>

Brooke-Rose's comments on the rhythm of the translation are more astute, although she remains attached to the idea of Pound working in error. After detailing the different rhythms of Sievers's 'five types' of Anglo-Saxon verse,<sup>46</sup> Brooke-Rose argues that Pound 'breaks the rules and constantly uses the forbidden half-lines, in which the two lifts come together and the two dips merge' (i.e. a half-line such as / x x /, or x x / /). This, she claims, produced 'the characteristic Poundian line, ending in either a spondee (two stressed syllables together), or, on the contrary, in several unaccented syllables'.<sup>47</sup> The insight is a valuable one and confirms Hugh Kenner's earlier identification of two consecutive stressed syllables as a major feature of Pound's rhythm.<sup>48</sup> Brooke-Rose

<sup>43</sup> Perhaps Pound intends something of the force of *for þon*, though other choices would have rendered this more clearly.

<sup>44</sup> To be fair to Pound, the original line has incidental /m/ alliteration on unstressed syllables too, although in Anglo-Saxon there is not the same strain that Pound's archaic preposition produces.

<sup>45</sup> This non-functional alliteration has to be ignored when scanning Pound's 'Seafarer'.

<sup>46</sup> In brief they are: type A (falling rhythm), / x / x; type B (rising rhythm), x / x /; type C (clashing rhythm), x / / x; type D (double stress, followed by secondary stress), / / \ x, or / / x \; type E (full stresses interrupted by secondary stress), / \ x / . More than one unstressed syllable can be placed in the dips marked 'x'.

Sievers first developed this theory of classification in 1885 and it rapidly became accepted as the point of departure for all future treatment of Anglo-Saxon metre. Pound could have been familiar with the theory from his own copy of Sweet's *Reader*, 7th edn, pp. lxxxix-xciv. For a straightforward introduction to the system, see C. S. Lewis, 'The Alliterative Metre', in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. by Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 15-26, or Donald Scragg, 'The nature of Old English verse'. For further information, see A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

<sup>47</sup> Brooke-Rose, *ZBC of Pound*, p. 89.

<sup>48</sup> Kenner notes that 'pairings' of repeated words is how Pound sometimes translates the reduplication of Chinese characters in poems of *Cathay*. Where these repetitions are monosyllables, the double stress

refers to two examples of lines in 'The Seafarer' ending with double stresses (lines 39 and 40), although a glance at the poem will reveal several others.<sup>49</sup>

Brooke-Rose is close to identifying the first rhythmical feature which Pound develops from Anglo-Saxon, but misleads, by limiting this rhythmical feature to the line-endings only. Consecutive stressed syllables frequently occur in Anglo-Saxon, most straightforwardly in type C (the clashing stress of a verse that rises and immediately falls). A more complicated double beat (in types D and E) also arises through the use of half-stresses.<sup>50</sup> These are often the result of the Anglo-Saxon habit of compounding. The second element of a compound word (particularly if substantive) cannot be demoted to a mere dip without violating the language's natural laws of accent.<sup>51</sup> In poetry this means verses ('half-lines') can consist of two and a half stresses instead of the standard two, and in compounds, these often find the half stress in a position immediately consecutive to one of the main stresses. The effect of this on the ear is much closer to the double blow of two clashing stresses than it is to a simple fall.<sup>52</sup>

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occurs: 'blue, blue, is the grass about the river' ('The Beautiful Toilet'). Kenner, *Pound Era*, pp. 192-4. For other types of spondee in *Cathay*, see pp. 200-1 & 208.

<sup>49</sup> No line numbers for examples of 'the contrary' are given (i.e. several unaccented syllables at the end of a line), and it is difficult to see what Brooke-Rose might mean. Several lines of 'The Seafarer' end with one or two unstressed syllables, but there is nothing untoward about these in terms of Sievers' five types: types B and C permit it.

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that some scholars use four levels of stress for analyzing Anglo-Saxon metre, but Pound is likely to have been familiar with Sievers's system of three. For C. S. Lewis, the great advantage of Anglo-Saxon prosody is that the clashing stresses of C, D and E-types make available to the poet 'a genuine English speech rhythm', which has 'been allowed no metrical recognition for centuries'. Lewis, *Selected Essays*, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Compare 'the black bird' (x / /); 'the blackbird' (x / \); 'the black one' (x / x). This same point was made in the last chapter with reference to Hopkins's compounds. It becomes a more conspicuous part of Pound's style.

<sup>52</sup> In Anglo-Saxon metre it seems that if a stressed syllable was also long, it could do without its dip and therefore the next lift could follow immediately: a further opportunity for stressed syllables to become consecutive.

What we might term clashing stresses, of one form or another, are typical and conspicuous characteristics of Anglo-Saxon verse. Pound's auditory imagination is fascinated by these clashes.<sup>53</sup> No doubt they seem to him the rhythmical expression of a raw, muscular and macho vigour which he associated with 'The North'. Clashing stresses are employed frequently throughout his 'Seafarer', both in verses which are a 'legal' permutation of Sievers's five types, and (like those Brooke-Rose draws our attention to) 'illegal' verses.<sup>54</sup>

Most characteristically, Pound achieves the less authentic consecutive stress at line-endings by using a final compound noun, or with an equivalent compound genitive phrase. A glance at the end of lines will illustrate how common this pattern is: 'mead-drink', 'mind's lust', 'earth's midst', 'sea-fare', 'wave's slash', 'breastlock', 'mere-flood', 'sword-hate', and 'life's-blast'.<sup>55</sup> Considered alongside the internal clashes of stressed syllables in 'The Seafarer', it becomes apparent that this phenomenon is not an 'error', nor is it unique to line-endings, but rather part of Pound's more general excitement with this strident double-stress.<sup>56</sup> His ear is true to the spirit of Anglo-Saxon rhythms, even if he has tinkered with its details.

<sup>53</sup> James Joyce also associated clashing stresses with Anglo-Saxon, remarking of his 'Oxen of the Sun' episode in *Ulysses* that 'the double-thudding Anglo-Saxon motive recurs from time to time'. Joyce relates the development of a human embryo in an English that evolves historically during the episode, from Anglo-Saxon beginnings. Letter to Frank Budgen of March 1920, cited in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 489. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, rev. edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 382.

<sup>54</sup> Verses equivalent to type C include 'The heart's thought that' (line 34), 'On flood-ways to be' (line 52), 'On earth's shelter' (line 61), and 'My lord deems to me' (line 65). Those equivalent to types D and E, where a secondary stress falls immediately after a primary stress, are more plentiful: 'Nor gold-giving lords' (line 83: I take 'Nor' to be similar to the extra-metrical dip that frequently appeared at the start of a line of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with no effect on the metre), 'Mere-weary mood' (line 12), 'Wealthy and wine-flushed' (line 29), and 'Neareth nightshade' (line 31).

<sup>55</sup> 'Ring-having', 'world's delight' and 'lone-flyer' look similar in design, but are not clashing stresses. A few lines also close with other syntactic forms of double stress, e.g. 'dead life', but these are not so characteristic.

<sup>56</sup> It is necessary to emphasize that the double-stress is difficult to achieve and normally shunned in the accentual-syllabic tradition of English versification (the spondee occurs rarely, as a substitute foot for measures containing unstressed syllables).

Another defining characteristic of Anglo-Saxon prosody, and the second rhythmical feature Pound draws on, is its propensity for falling rhythms. The effect of a falling rhythm is often to drive a line onwards with a force and energy not felt in more measured, restrained rising rhythms.<sup>57</sup> Sievers's A-type pattern, equivalent to trochaic or dactylic measures in accentual-syllabics, is the most common half-line in Anglo-Saxon poetry.<sup>58</sup> *Sipas secgan* is the defining tune of *The Seafarer* and it repeats itself throughout the poem in phrases like *earfodhwile*, *caldum clommmum*, and *hat ymb heortan*. Pound preserves this hook in his version, starting at exactly the same point with 'Journey's jargon' (how Pound 'translates' *sipas secgan*), and carries on echoing it in 'Chill its chains are', 'Fields to fairness' and all its other permutations in the poem. This is not to say that Pound is reinventing the wheel: poets have used falling rhythms without having translated from Anglo-Saxon. The point is that, far from being a charlatan, Pound has recognised one of the most important characteristics of the rhythm of 'The Seafarer' and has preserved that driving impetus in his own version.

Finally, Pound seizes upon the extraordinary flexibility of this seafaring rhythm. When such a remark is made of Anglo-Saxon verse, sceptics might be tempted to think that it is an excuse for metrical looseness. After all, if it does not matter whether a dip consists of one syllable or several, surely the rhythm is scarcely disciplined enough to deserve the title of metre? Such an attitude results from looking for the discipline in the wrong place. Flexibility in the Anglo-Saxon line is provided, and even encouraged, by the combination of two, normally differently patterned verses, into one line. Thus the first line of the

<sup>57</sup> Compare the effect of trochaic (falling) rhythm in Blake's 'Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright / In the forests of the night', with the iambic (rising) rhythm of Shakespeare's twelfth sonnet, 'When I do count the clock that tells the time'.

Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* can be scanned as a B-type verse contrasted with an E-type, the next as an A verse against a C verse and so on.<sup>59</sup> This constant contrast between different patterns of equal weight as the verse progresses creates a contrapuntal music of great variation, which is in essence quite different from the accentual-syllabic tradition which dominates later English poetry, where one pattern tends to hold for a whole line, and whole poems are typified by variation from one dominant pattern.

Again, the keen-eared Pound latches onto this device of varying the half-lines and incorporates it in his own version. One way to scan his opening line would be as a B-type verse followed by a D-type (or an E-type depending on whether one thought 'truth' or 'reck' to be the stronger syllable):

x / x x x /	/ / \ x
May I for my own self	song's truth reckon <sup>60</sup>

'Mere-weary man. Lest man know not' is an E verse followed by a B.<sup>61</sup> Variation in the line was not obligatory. As one might expect from a predominantly falling corpus of verse, double A-type lines were the most typical unvaried line (*winter wunade wræccan lastum*). Pound's version rings true once again, with many of his lines echoing the original in this respect. In fact it is striking how often Pound's rendering of an original line matches its rhythm almost exactly: 'Weathered the winter, wretched outcast'.

To recapitulate, the rhythm of Pound's 'Seafarer', in common with his original text, is predominantly falling, rich in clashing stresses, and varies on either side of the caesura.

<sup>58</sup> Sweet states this clearly in his *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. xciv.

<sup>59</sup> *Mæg ic be me sylfum soðgiedd wrecan, / siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum.* Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>60</sup> A natural stress could easily be placed on 'own', instead of 'self'. I assume, from Pound's /s/ alliteration and the fact that *sylfum* is stressed in the original, that he intends the less obvious reading I give. Scansion is always an interpretative act, subject to individual performance, not an absolute science (unlike phonetics, on which it depends). Whether or not one agrees with my interpretations of individual lines, my general point about rhythmic flexibility stands.



Pound has found other ways of achieving some of these features, not typical of Anglo-Saxon (for example ending a line with clashing stresses). The use of four lifts per line (or two to the verse), although deployed in Pound's translation, is not a metrical concept he is faithful to in his later Saxonist writings:<sup>62</sup> the three characteristics outlined above come to typify certain varieties of his free verse.<sup>63</sup>

### Pound's Rhythms before 'The Seafarer'

These traits are hinted at in Pound's earlier poems, but remain isolated and undeveloped quirks before the revelation of 'The Seafarer'. After the translation, they become part of Pound's rhythmical signature. One does not have to resort to the juvenilia of 'Hilda's Book' to demonstrate that while Pound was, like many late Victorians, a restless experimenter; much of his early work remains within the broad parameters of the accentual-syllabic tradition. It took him some time to develop a prosody that breaks free from this inheritance, although, like Swinburne, Morris and Rossetti, he often stretched these metres to their intelligible limits in the pursuit of new tunes, as a few pre-'Seafarer' examples will demonstrate.

Written in 1909, four years after Pound's Anglo-Saxon studies at Hamilton College, 'Planh for the Young English King', is in stately, quite proper iambic pentameter. It is

<sup>61</sup> I take 'not' to be an emphatic particle here, otherwise we have a C type.

<sup>62</sup> By the time Pound studied Anglo-Saxon, it was clear that not all the poetry conformed to this ideal at all times. Three-stress verses (i.e. hypermetric lines of six stresses) had been recognised (Sweet calls them 'lengthened or three-wave verses; *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, p. xciv) and a small number of possibly 'deficient' half-lines of only one strong stress made unanimity on the normality of four-stressed lines harder to reach.

<sup>63</sup> I believe it is to these qualities that Thom Gunn refers, when he writes of a rhythm 'based on the Old English accentual line as it was loosened and revised by Pound, one of the most useful and flexible technical innovations of the century'. Gunn, a poet with a sensitive ear, hears this legacy of Pound's in the work of Donald Hall. Thom Gunn, 'Living in the Present', in *Shelf Life: essays, Memoirs and an Interview* (London: Faber, 1994), pp. 96-101 (p. 98).



only when we get to the sixth line that there is any significant deviation from the regularity of five, rising, duple feet per line.<sup>64</sup>

If all the grief and woe and bitterness,  
All dolour, ill and every evil chance  
That ever came upon this grieving world  
Were set together they would seem but light  
Against the death of the young English King.  
Worth lieth riven and Youth dolorous,  
The world o'ershadowed, soiled and overcast,  
Void of all joy and full of ire and sadness.<sup>65</sup>

This sixth line also counts ten syllables and is a variation on, rather than an over-throw of, the dominant pattern. A traditional metrical account for this line would say that the first foot has been substituted with a spondee, the second remains consistent, the third is pyrrhic, and that the fourth and fifth have been reversed (as trochees).<sup>66</sup> It is tempting to see the new tune of line six as the result of the English rhythmical chemical at work in Pound's ear. It sees the first use of the archaic verb form ('lieth') in this poem: a verb inflexion Pound is fond of using when writing in cod-mediaeval English (there are styles and meters to match matters, and this poem about the mediaeval is written in mock-mediaeval). Pound uses the same archaism frequently in 'The Seafarer'. Such inflexions have the phonetic quality of making single-syllable verbs into trochees: falling rhythm. This fall is repeated in 'riven', a word which sounds as if it should come from his 'Seafarer' (it actually comes from Old Norse *rifa* and has all the flavour of the 'germanisiered'). However we account for it in scansion, we must also acknowledge that 'Worth' (which alliterates with 'world' in the next line) and 'lieth' present the ear with two clashing stresses. In fact the rhythmical effect of this line is similar to that of an

<sup>64</sup> In line five, the third foot has been substituted with a pyrrhic, and the fourth with a spondee. A simpler way to describe this would be to say that the third lift ('young') has reversed position with the fourth unstressed syllable ('the'). The flow of the iambic pentameter is scarcely interrupted by this.

<sup>65</sup> First stanza of the poem, printed in full in Ezra Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, (London: Faber, 1984), pp. 36-7.

<sup>66</sup> The last line of the stanza is also deviant, but less dramatically so.

Anglo-Saxon line made up of an E-verse and a B-verse. It is fanciful to suggest that this line is in direct imitation of Anglo-Saxon verse, and its immediate context argues otherwise, but it may suggest how Pound was growing restless with the regularity of accentual-syllabics and how his ear is already receptive to an alternative rhythmical model. He is ready for 'The Seafarer', or it for him.

'Ballatetta' tells a similar story.<sup>67</sup> Again the poem is mostly in regular iambic pentameters, with minor variations, but one line anticipates the imminent Saxonesque rhythm.

The light became her grace and dwelt among  
Blind eyes and shadows that are formed as men;  
Lo, how the light doth melt us into song:

The broken sunlight for a helm she beareth  
Who hath my heart in jurisdiction.  
In wild-wood never fawn nor fallow fareth  
So silent light; no gossamer is spun  
So delicate as she is, when the sun  
Drives the clear emeralds from the bended grasses  
Lest they should parch too swiftly, where she passes.

The alliterative compound 'wild-wood' creates the effect of a half-stress clashing against a full stress, a characteristic feature of both Anglo-Saxon rhythm and Pound's version of it. This disruption to the iambic predominance effectively reverses the line's movement: one can hear four distinct falls after the compound (one is again created with the archaic inflexion, 'fareth'; a verb found several times in Pound's 'Sea-farer'). Three stresses alliterate with /f/. This line would not look at all out of place in 'The Seafarer', despite the company it keeps in 'Ballatetta'.

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<sup>67</sup> *Collected Early Poems*, p. 147.

'Sestina: Altaforte' also makes use of clashing stresses early in Pound's career.<sup>68</sup> In particular, Pound ends a few lines with the double stress Brooke-Rose identifies in 'The Seafarer' (e.g. 'swords clash'). Ending the last line of stanza two with four consecutive stresses ('And through all the riven skies God's swords clash') must have seemed almost insanely daring in 1909. The subject matter of the poem makes it clear that Pound associates this rhythmic feature with masculine energy and even violence:

The man who fears war and squats opposing  
 My words for stour, hath no blood of crimson  
 But is fit only to rot in womanish peace  
 Far from where worth's won and the swords clash  
 For the death of such sluts I go rejoicing;  
 Yea, I fill all the air with my music.

Yet while Pound was proud of the technical achievements of the poem, he admitted (before the Great War) that 'a poem on such a theme could never be important'.<sup>69</sup>

Such examples are the warning tremors felt at the surface of Pound's metrical geology, the indicators of a seismic shift about to make itself felt in his poetic. The eruption of the full-blown, new rhythm itself is clearly 'The Seafarer', although its fall-out does not end with that poem.<sup>70</sup> The examples given above are atypical of the pre-*Ripostes* poems. 'Paracelsus in Excelsis', 'Ballad of the Goodly Fere' and 'Pierre Vidal Old' are more exemplary of Pound's early rhythmical experiments; variations on traditional accentual syllabic. These variations persist into *Ripostes*, though executed with greater sophistication, as in 'Silet', 'Portrait d'une Femme' and 'The Needle'. Nothing in the collection can compete with the rhythmical muscularity of 'The Seafarer', and it takes Pound some time to apply its methods more widely. By *Cathay* the pentameter, and

<sup>68</sup> Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>69</sup> *T.P.'s Weekly*, 6 June 1913, p. 707. Cited by Brooker, *A Student's Guide*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Rhythmically, *Cathay* capitalises on the 'Seafarer' developments. This is one reason why 'The Seafarer' has a longer afterlife than most of *Ripostes* and is reprinted, in 1915, in the middle of the *Cathay* poems,

accentual-syllabics, have been overthrown.<sup>71</sup> The poems of *Cathay* could be called 'free verse', yet it is not the loose free verse of a figure like Whitman or Lawrence. The *Cathay* poems incorporate the developments made in 'The Seafarer'. The terse, measured quality of the verse is in part due to the economy with which unstressed syllables are deployed and the frequency with which consecutive stresses fall. Also learnt from 'The Seafarer' is the constant variation in tune; the way in which a falling cadence is varied against a clashing one, then another against a rising, and so on. Several, but not all the poems of *Cathay* are predominantly in falling rhythms (and the tune 'journey's jargon' can be heard in a number of places), but this is merely one of the options now opened to Pound by his Anglo-Saxon experiments, rather than a feature he must adhere to rigidly.

#### An Ear for the Sea-surge

These options are exploited fully and brilliantly in 'Canto I'. There are many ways in which this poem marries language and subject. 'Canto I' is a return to beginnings. Pound deals with the matter of the *Nekuia*, often held to be the oldest part of Homer, traditionally the first poet of European literature. As Pound's target language is English, he concludes that the most appropriate form of English to use is a Saxonised form, based on the oldest surviving remains of his own literature. Whatever else 'Canto I' tells us, it demonstrates the complexity of beginnings. Like Joyce, Pound gestures towards the threshold of the English language and of European literary tradition, gazing back along the stridentwining cable of literature in search of the first, navel-less Eve of a poem. It cannot be found. There was poetry before Homer and there was a form of English before our earliest written records: the opening word of 'Canto I', 'AND', acknowledges the

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with which it is contemporary in more ways than the temporal (Pound believed 'The Seafarer' and Li Po's 'Exile's Letter' both to date from the eighth century; see his remark in *ABC of Reading*, p. 51).

<sup>71</sup> In later life Pound recollected: 'To break the pentameter, that was the first heave'. *Cantos*, p. 532.

impossibility of starting anywhere other than *in medias res* (in 1917, it was literally *in medias res*, forming part of the original third canto). Pound's solution is to superimpose as many types of beginnings as possible in his first poem. Although Pound knew some Greek, he does not actually work from ancient Greek, but a Latin translation made in the Renaissance, a work made new in an age of new beginnings. Hoping to effect a new, American-led renaissance, Pound's language for the *Nekuia* is not the mock-Anglo-Saxon of 'The Seafarer', but a modern version of it.<sup>72</sup>

Other reasons present themselves for the fusion of Anglo-Saxon elegy and ancient Greek epic, for although Pound credits Homer with the gift of inscribing the sound of the sea in verse, it is not only the Greek poet with an 'ear, ear for the sea-surge'.<sup>73</sup> Just as Pound the emigré, Odysseus, and the speaker of 'The Seafarer' all merge in the first two cantos, so too do Pound the poet, Homer, and the *Seafarer*-scop. 'Sea-surge' is the same compound which Pound chose some ten years before 'Canto II' to translate *yþa gewealc*.<sup>74</sup> words the Seafarer-poet had chosen over a millennium earlier. In both Homer and the *Seafarer*-poet, Pound detects a common talent for nautical verse. Yet it is only through an equal adeptness on the part of their metrical match-maker that the sea-surge of ancient Greek and of English are brought together in a dynamic cultural and linguistic vortex. Pound sees the possibilities that the two poets offer for a hybridised sea-song, precisely because his aims and abilities are already in sympathy with theirs. Moreover, Homer is an oral poet, of whom we know nothing; so is the *Seafarer*-poet. Both poems describe the

<sup>72</sup> For Andreas Divus's Latin text, see 'Translators of Greek', in Ezra Pound, *Make It New* (London: Faber, 1934), pp. 125–56.

<sup>73</sup> From 'Canto II'. Pound, *Cantos*, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> Line 6 of 'The Seafarer', in Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 171. Rendered by Pound 'Known on my keel many a care's hold / And dire sea-surge'. Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 64.

wandering of sailors, hoping to regain the comforts of home, deprived of all companions, whose loss is mourned. Both poems pitch human fragility against the unforgiving ocean.

In Pound's attempt to chart 'the tale of the tribe', the sea plays a critical role.

Historically, sailors (like translators) have been at the interfaces between civilisations and navigators are portrayed heroically in Pound's poem, exemplifying all that is progressive, independent and courageous in the human spirit. Upon the sea have been carried ideas, values, tradeable commodities, language and war, from one culture to another. The Eleusinian mysteries were carried over the sea from the Eastern Mediterranean to Provence: or so Pound believed.<sup>75</sup> Small wonder that Pound should use the sea as a structural device in a poem which has the ambition of being the latest vessel to carry the stories and histories of such cargoes to unknown peoples.

To European civilisation, the Mediterranean basin may be the more glamorous cradle, but it shares its cultural importance with the more foreboding North Sea/Baltic basin. Pound is determined (like Morris before him and Pound's disciple Bunting after him),<sup>76</sup> that the early expressions of both northern and southern European civilisation, and the corresponding moods of their seas, should be present in his epic poem.<sup>77</sup> For the

<sup>75</sup> 'I believe that a light from Eleusis persisted throughout the middle ages and set beauty in the song of Provence and of Italy'. Pound, 'Credo', in Pound, Ezra, *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973), p. 53.

<sup>76</sup> See the second part of 'Briggflatts' in Basil Bunting, *Collected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 43-48.

<sup>77</sup> As Fred Robinson notes, one of the first Anglo-Saxon texts Pound studied was Alfred's account of the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan (pp. 17-23 in Pound's edition of Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. See also Robinson, 'Might of the North', p. 200). These translations of Orosius's 'History of the World' (a title which could serve as a tag for *The Cantos*), describe voyages in the North, White and Baltic seas. As if to guide future travellers, careful attention is paid to length of journey in days' sea-travel, and the lie and appearance of various lands from the ship's deck. The text provides a kind of Germanic *periplum* of the northern seas. Significantly, when Pound defines this term, he has recourse to his Saxonist mode, employing alliteration and the 'Canto I' 'sea bord': 'periplum, not as land looks on a map / but as sea bord seen by men sailing'. Pound, *Cantos*, p. 324.



medieval poetry of the North possesses qualities not present in that of the South. Pound is explicit about this in 'I gather the Limbs of Osiris':

I have, moreover, sought in Anglo-Saxon a certain element which has transmuted the various qualities of poetry which have drifted up from the south, which has sometimes enriched and made them English, sometimes rejected them, and refused combination.<sup>78</sup>

Pound studied that 'certain element' at Hamilton College: it is the melopoeia of the accentual, non-syllabic line, patterned by alliterative lettering. It is this that he brings into conjunction with the sea poetry of the South in the early Cantos,<sup>79</sup> partly fulfilling his own prediction that 'English verse of the future will be a sort of orchestration taking account of all these systems'.<sup>80</sup> Several features are shared by the Homeric and Northern traditions before Pound grafts them together. Compound epithets, so much a stock feature of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, may have reminded Pound of the compound words of Anglo-Saxon. This felicitous similarity in subject-matter and idiom enabled Pound to create a synthetic pan-European voice of the sea: a style which is not merely ancient, or medieval, or a simple blurring of the two, but becomes as a part of contemporary European culture.

As 'Canto I' starts with a journey into the dead, resurrecting the ghost of Odysseus's companion Elpenor, so Pound brings the ghost of a 'dead' language back to life. Michael Alexander has written of the Anglo-Saxon 'linguistic tar' which marks the diction of 'Canto I'.<sup>81</sup> This is evidenced in words like 'swart', 'pitkin', 'sea-bord' and the conspicuously opaque 'dreory' (A-S. *dreorig*, 'bloody'). The seafarer's 'keel' also washes up early in 'Canto I'. More obliquely, the rendering of the source *sepulchrumque*

<sup>78</sup> Pound, 'I gather the Limbs of Osiris', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 21-43 (p. 24). Pound sees Anglo-Saxon poetry as the only original, formal contribution English has made to world literature. See *Kulchur*, p. 168.

<sup>79</sup> China is hinted at with the introduction of So Shu churning the sea in 'Canto II' (*Cantos*, pp. 6 & 9), but it is not until 'Canto XIII' that this is sounded as a major note in the poem.

<sup>80</sup> Pound, *Selected Prose*, p. 33.

*mihi accumula cani in litore maris* ('and build up a grave for me on the shore of the grey sea'),<sup>82</sup> with the distinctly Saxonesque 'Heap up mine arms, be tomb by sea-bord,' might be a distant echo of Beowulf's instruction to Wiglaf: *Hatað heaðomære hlæw gewyrcean / beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan* ('order the battle-famed to build a burial-mound, splendid after my funeral-pyre at the sea's headland').<sup>83</sup>

### Rhythms of 'The Seafarer' in 'Canto I'

Although it is routinely assumed that 'Canto I' reproduces Anglo-Saxon rhythms via 'The Seafarer', the number of stressed syllables in each line varies considerably. The first line has three lifts for example, and the second five.<sup>84</sup> Many do break into half-lines of two stresses ('Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward'; 'Bore us out onward with bellying canvas'; 'Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean';<sup>85</sup> 'Limbs that we left in the house of Circe'), but here Pound is not writing in Anglo-Saxon prosody, but a development from it.<sup>86</sup> The drive of 'Canto I' is accounted for by the falling rhythms he has preserved from his 'Seafarer'. All the lines quoted above exhibit patterns equivalent to a double A-type line in Sievers's system. Approximately half of the lines start with a stressed syllable,<sup>87</sup> creating an initial fall with which to launch the line. This disposes of the 'heave' which Pound complains of at the start of so many iambic lines.<sup>88</sup> Many more lines can be added to those with a falling quality if an initial, unstressed syllable is

<sup>81</sup> 'Canvas', not reached until the seventh line, is the first word of romance origins in the Canto. Michael Alexander, 'Ezra Pound as Translator', *Translation and Literature*, 6 (1997), 23-30 (p. 26).

<sup>82</sup> My translation. Latin text in Pound, *Make It New*, p. 140.

<sup>83</sup> Lines 2802-3, *Beowulf*, p. 189.

<sup>84</sup> I reproduce most of the canto as appendix IV, marking the stresses as Pound performed them in a recording. For the full text, see Pound, *Cantos*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>85</sup> Not strictly alliterative, /s/ is not equivalent to /sl/ in Anglo-Saxon: /sh/ is an entirely different phoneme.

<sup>86</sup> Pound once suggested: 'Culture: what is left after a man has forgotten all he set out to learn?' One could say that 'Canto I' is what is left after Pound has forgotten his Anglo-Saxon. *Kulchur*, p. 195.

<sup>87</sup> Thirty-three of the sixty-seven lines, scanned according to Pound's performance.

<sup>88</sup> See 'A Retrospect', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), pp. 3-14 (p. 6).

discounted as extra-metrical (a licence allowed in both Anglo-Saxon prosody and accentual-syllabics); e.g. 'We set up mast and sail on that swart ship'.<sup>89</sup>

Clashing stresses and half-stresses are also part of the music of this piece. The rhythmic tattoo of 'Dark blood flowed' marks time even more deliberately than in 'The Seafarer', though triple clashing stresses remain rare. More common are phrases such as 'Souls stained with recent tears', 'Nor with stars stretched', 'mauled with bronze lance heads.' The clashing stress of a compound genitive at the line-ending, which Pound so relished in 'The Seafarer', is also found here with 'sickly death's-heads'. In this and other compounds, the half-stresses of the second element are again used to arrest the ear. 'Trim-coifed goddess' and 'close-webbed mist' are of a kind with the 'ice-cold sea' in 'The Seafarer' and create spiky cadences similar to the D and E-types of Anglo-Saxon prosody.<sup>90</sup>

Pound also makes good use of the flexibility of his Saxonist line. Rhythmic patterns are set up with one phrase and varied with the next. These phrases often form half-lines, but balance between the two halves of a line is no longer a guiding principle: several lines of 'Canto I' consist only of two or three stressed syllables, as if independent half-lines (which in a sense they are now that alliteration is not used as a consistent binding force). 'Set keel to breakers' is essentially rising in character, but is followed by the falling 'forth on the godly sea'. 'Circe's this craft' falls and is varied in the next half-line by the type E-like 'the trim-coifed goddess'. The short line 'With glitter of sun-rays' approximates

<sup>89</sup> This occurs in 'The Seafarer' with 'He singeth summerward, bodeth sorrow,' and an example of the principle at work in the original can be heard in *bihongen hrimgicelum*, line 17.

<sup>90</sup> Compound epithets, so characteristic of Homer's style, are scarce in Divus's Latin: Pound does not derive his compounds from his immediate source.

the rhythm of the Anglo-Saxon D-type line and is followed by 'Nor with starts stretched', a phrase which rises to a double stress clash.

The alliteration, used much more sparingly than in 'The Seafarer', is suggestive of early English verse without being overbearing. Generally speaking, Pound has refrained from using the device on syllables other than those which carry the stress, so that his lines are not over-charged with head-rhyme, but neither does he use it regularly enough for it to be a functional device. Many lines are lettered with a key sound: /b/ marks lines four and six for example, /w/ line five, /k/ lines seven and thirteen, /s/ line three and so on, but many more lines are unmarked by internal alliteration. If one considers those stressed syllables which alliterate over adjacent line-divisions (not an Anglo-Saxon norm, but an infrequent occurrence which Scragg felt worth noting), then fewer lines are left entirely bare of lettering. 'Came we then to the bounds of deepest water' participates in the patterning of its following line, 'To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled cities', just as 'And drawing sword from my hip' does with 'I dug the ell-square pitkin'. This is still no use as a metrical principle, but the phonetic texture of the poem is made tighter, more dense, and more audible through this Saxonesque lettering.

Syntactically, 'Canto I' echoes the idioms of 'The Seafarer' and the occasional inversion or archaism serves to elevate the tone of the poem, as befits the epic style.

Simultaneously, such tactics engineer rhythmic effects that define this poem's music.

'Came we then' enables Pound to sing this line in the poem's dominant falling mode: the inversion over-throws the heave of the otherwise rising phrase. 'Moaneth alway' is perhaps where the trick was learnt.<sup>91</sup> Opening a phrase with 'nor', is also a device learnt

<sup>91</sup> 'The Seafarer', in Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 65.

from 'The Seafarer'. There, 'nor' is repeated with list-like intensity.<sup>92</sup> In 'Canto I' we find a more subdued repetition of initial 'nor' only in line fifteen. Other inversions that aid the fine-tuning of this rhythm are the consecutive noun-adjective reversals 'girls tender' and 'Men many',<sup>93</sup> which bring together stressed syllables that would otherwise be separated by a dip. Elision of articles, another Saxonism, can also produce characteristic rhythmic effects, as well as achieving a compression that increases the ratio of stressed syllables to unstressed. Omitting 'the' (not to mention a suppressed verbal idea; went?), from 'Sun to his slumber', ensures the line starts with a bang, not a whimper, as does 'Circe's this craft'; both a (verbal) compression and an inversion. In his unpublished essay 'The Music of Beowulf', Pound writes that 'the misunderstood principle of alliterative verse is possibly radical in all proper vers libre in our language'.<sup>94</sup> In 'Canto I' Pound re-activates that principle to write free verse that is vigorous, forceful and melodic. The melody does not cease when Pound interrupts himself to silence Andreas Divus. One only has to turn the page to hear the persistence of its music beyond 'Canto I'.

### The Big-bazoo of 'Canto II'

What is now 'Canto II', was in 1922, the draft of the eighth canto.<sup>95</sup> Some prefatory material nods to Browning (a presiding figure in the original 'Draft of Three Cantos'), and introduces the blurred Helen of Troy/Eleanor of Aquitaine figure. The bulk of the Canto re-works Ovid's story from the *Metamorphoses* of Dionysius's transformation on the pirate ship to Naxos. Where 'Canto I' describes the wanderings at sea of a man trying

<sup>92</sup> Variation with *ne* is extremely common in Anglo-Saxon, particularly the poems Pound most admired. See lines 15-16 and 66-9 of *The Wanderer* and lines 40-1, 44-6 and 94-6 of *The Seafarer*, in Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, pp. 159-63 & 171-4.

<sup>93</sup> Note in appendix IV, that Pound normalizes this phrase to 'many men' in his recorded performance.

<sup>94</sup> See appendix III.

to get home, 'Canto II' deals with the sea voyages of a god trying to get 'home' (Dionysius was especially venerated on Naxos). Rhythmically, the idiom of the two seafaring cantos is very similar. The economy of syntax reduces the number of unstressed syllables: clashing stresses increase as the metamorphosis unfolds.<sup>96</sup> Saxonesque compounding is taken to an extreme, as nouns and adjectives are brought into meaningful relationships not by prepositional phrases, but the hyphen.<sup>97</sup> Yet more unstressed syllables are pared away by this device and the half stresses on the second element often clash against the head of the compound: this verse is rich in D and E-type cadences. After the 'god-sleight' begins, falling rhythms become dominant: 'Water cutting under the keel, / Sea-break from stern forrads'.

Worrying about where his long poem was leading him, Pound wrote to Ford Madox Ford on 13 January 1922, asking for frank advice on the draft of the then 'Canto VIII'. Calling Pound 'a mediaeval gargoyle' in his reply,<sup>98</sup> Ford criticizes the precision of some of the observations in the canto before remarking:

It is the same with your compound words like "spray-whited" & "cord-welter." – But as to these I am not so certain: my dislike for them may be my personal distaste for Anglo-Saxon locutions which always affect me with nausea & yr. purpose in using them may be the purely aesthetic one of roughening up yr. surface. I mean that, if you shd. cut them out you might well get too slick an effect.

Ford has no hesitation in identifying the rough surface of the compound words (probably referring to the unfamiliar clashing stresses they encourage, and the abbreviation of syntactic norms) with an Anglo-Saxon style. Ford does not like the effect, but sees its

<sup>95</sup> Pound/Ford: *The Story of a Literary Friendship*, ed. by Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (London: Faber, 1971), p. 62.

<sup>96</sup> In particular Pound suppresses the verb 'be' in the copula (predicative use of the verb), to great effect: 'God-sleight them, god-sleight: / Ship stock fast in sea-swirl, / Ivy upon the oars, King Pentheus, / grapes with no seed but sea-foam, / Ivy in scupper-hole.' Pound, *Cantos*, p. 7. See also the clashing stress of 'smith's sling', a compound genitive at the end of a line, reminiscent of 'The Seafarer' (p. 8).



point. Writing to thank Ford for his criticisms (letter undated), Pound emphasizes the necessity of the verse's rough surface:

I tried a smoother presentation and lost the metamorphosis, got to be a hurley burley, or no one believes in the change of the ship. [...] Re/ The double words, and rep. of cadence. The suffering reader is supposed to have waded through seven cantos already: MUST bang up the big-bazoo a bit, I mean rhythm must strengthen here if he is to be kept going. KHRRRIST, To make a man read forty pages of poetry, and with prospect of 300 to follow???

For Pound, Anglo-Saxon prosody is riotous and noisy; a big-bazoo (alliterative and compounded).<sup>100</sup> Like a bass drum, it strengthens a rhythm: banging it wakes up the reader, holds attention. It is not flabby, discursive or easy to skim. Later in the same letter he wonders if 'it wd. be easier to cut the 7 preceding cantos & let Acoetes continue'.<sup>101</sup> He does in fact decide to cut much of this material, and re-arranges the rest, so that the Saxonised III becomes I, and the Saxonised VIII becomes II. Why let the reader's attention wander in the first place, so that it becomes necessary to win it back by banging up the big-bazoo? Pound decides to bang it up at the start of his epic with his compound of two cantos, joined by the sea. Having read eight pages of that calibre, the reader may be prepared to attempt the remaining eight hundred.

#### Damn Longlegged Barstards: Snipe

'Canto II' is important to understanding the continuing Saxonist elements in Pound's poetic, not only from a rhythmical perspective. For it proves that his undergraduate study of Anglo-Saxon was so deeply ingrained in him that years later (about sixteen or seventeen years in this case), it would re-emerge in the details of even a seemingly

<sup>97</sup> I count seventy-one instances of two words yoked by a hyphen in 'Canto II' (not including 'ex-convict', as 'ex' is not an independent word). There are a few repetitions ('fore-stays') and some are normalized items of lexis ('ship-yard', 'olive-grove'), but most are of Pound's coining.

<sup>98</sup> He adds 'and it's not a bad thing to be'. The reply is dated 21 March 1922. *Pound/Ford*, p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

incidental motif. In a transitional passage, between Helen/Eleanor and Dionysius, are these lines:

Quiet sun-tawny sand-stretch,  
The gulls broad out their wings,  
          nipping between the splay feathers;  
Snipe come for their bath,  
          bend out their wing-joints,  
Spread wet wings to the sun-film,<sup>102</sup>

This appears to be local colour: we are reading of sea deities and sea birds are presented as part of their paraphernalia. However, they are also an image of transformation. At the moment when they spread their wings, the fowls of the sea become fowls of the air: they bridge antithetical environments. Similarly, this motif bridges two passages within a poem for which metamorphosis is both subject matter and a structural principle. The motif returns as Pound modulates out of the Dionysius story:

Then quiet water,  
          quiet in the buff sands,  
Sea-fowl stretching wing-joints,  
          splashing in rock-hollows and sand-hollows<sup>103</sup>

This image however, is not of Pound's own invention, but one that has stayed in his memory since Hamilton College, as the correspondence with Ford makes clear.

Ford expresses his worry that certain 'zoological questionabilities' will arrest the reader's attention and interrupt the flow of the text; this 'applies of course to Snipe'.<sup>104</sup> To which Pound replies:

Now Snipe?, aren't they the damn longlegged barstards that scurry along the sand in N.J.? I can hardly go in for reed-birds or more scientifically differintiated orniths. I wuz told as a kid

<sup>100</sup> In this respect, his opinion of Anglo-Saxon verse is similar to Longfellow's (see chapter one). However, Pound does not disappoint us with his own riotously noisy version.

<sup>101</sup> *Pound/Ford*, p. 67.

<sup>102</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> *Pound/Ford*, p. 64.

that the damn things were snipe. BATHIAN BRIMFUGL BRAEDAN FAETHRA, is the general text.<sup>105</sup>

The 'general text' which Pound is (presumably) quoting from memory is line 47 of *The Wanderer*, and runs *bapian brimfuglas, brædan feþra*.<sup>106</sup> Fred Robinson has demonstrated that Pound knew this poem well, and he catalogues Pound's several references to, and quotes from *The Wanderer*, both in his poetry and prose (although he has not noticed this particular instance).<sup>107</sup> In order to create these transitional lines, Pound has fused a 'fond memory of cheeildhood'<sup>108</sup> with a favourite image from a poem studied at college.

Referring these lines to their 'source' is not enough, for, despite Pound's confession of literary theft, the 'Canto II' passage is far from being a translation, even in the sense in which we might call Pound's 'Seafarer' a translation. The original is normally punctuated so that lines 45 to 48 are construed as one sentence, which might be rendered: 'Again, the companionless man wakes, sees before him the greenish waves, the sea-birds bathing, spreading their feathers, the falling frost and snow, mingled with hail' (the loss of companions is a major theme, which Pound associates with Anglo-Saxon poetry).<sup>109</sup> The surviving fragments of the early poetic translation found by Robinson are quite close to the literal sense of lines 47 and 48 ('seafowl bathing foist [?] forth their feathers / brawl rime and hail falling with snow mingled'). Pound's only significant departure is the addition of 'brawl'. This embellishment is presumably to reintroduce the /br/ motif, which he has lost in choosing to sound /f/ more emphatically. It also adds a depth of

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>106</sup> Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 160.

<sup>107</sup> Robinson, 'The Might of the North', pp. 203-4. The reader may recall that Robinson found a fragmentary translation of lines 47-8 of *The Wanderer* among Pound's unpublished papers.

<sup>108</sup> Pound/Ford, p. 66.

observed realism, alien to the original text. Seagulls do seem to squabble over their feeding-grounds, and both the mimetic quality of 'brawl' for their squawking, and its near-collocation with drunken old sailors are apposite. It seems that even the immature Pound was not so in awe of his text that he merely paraphrased it respectfully. For Pound, 'translating' from mediaeval poets is not just about finding a voice or style,<sup>110</sup> but finding new vantage-points from which to see the world: the observation of the original poet allows Pound to develop his own way of seeing. Pound is improvising on a poem here, ad-libbing from an established text as a jazz musician reinterprets a well-known, 'standard' melody.

Taking this principle to a further extreme, 'Canto II' makes quite free with its 'general text'. Substituting 'gulls' for *brimfugas* (or 'snipe' for that matter) is to naturalise the word, and as an updating of idiom, it is a clear improvement on 'seafowls', which may be faithful to the original, but not to its new context.<sup>111</sup> One can also see how 'broad out their wings' is more or less semantically equivalent to *brædan feþra*, and the manner in which the modern cognate 'broad' preserves the sound of its Anglo-Saxon near-homophone has been well documented in discussions of 'The Seafarer'.<sup>112</sup> In contrast to 'The Seafarer', the homophonic qualities of 'broad' are not needed as part of the immediate sound patterning. Pound has left behind him the bombastic fireworks of his 'Seafarer' idiom and created a movement which, while 'from the Anglo-Saxon', is more subtle, and more skilfully integrated within a music recognisably his own. The initial

<sup>109</sup> The full text is *donne onwæcneð eft wineleas guma, / gesihð him biðforan fealwe wegas, / bapian brimfugas, brædan feþra, / hreosan hrim and snaw hægle gemenged*. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, pp. 160-1.

<sup>110</sup> In this, his practice is much closer to what Chaucer or Gavin Douglas would have understood as 'translation' than that of most twentieth-century translators.

<sup>111</sup> Although Pound does use the word, hyphenated, in the reprise towards the end of the canto: perhaps to make the allusion clearer?

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Alexander, *Poetic Achievement*, pp.66-79.

plosive in 'broad' is distantly echoed by 'bath' and 'bend', but it is not an integral sound in the texture of this section. Why did Pound feel the need to recall the original Anglo-Saxon word in this way? Without the chance remark in the letter to Ford, it is highly unlikely that even the most attentive and sympathetic reader would have looked for an analogue to this extract in *The Wanderer*. Is this no more than a private joke Pound was making for himself? Possibly, and to the eye that has now spotted *The Wanderer* beneath these lines, the pun extends to 'stretch', the most obvious translation of *brædan*, but which is found in the previous line, where it describes the beach ('stretch' and 'broad out' gloss each other).<sup>113</sup> However, 'broad out' is more unusual in this context (as is 'stretch' in its context) and Pound may wish to seize the reader's attention. Furthermore, it does suggest the extent of the birds' wingspan (which a literal translation does not), the vowel provides an echo of 'tawny', in the preceding line, and, more faintly, reminds us of the oars that elsewhere beat the sea in this poem (or rather don't, when Dionysius has his way). In 'The Seafarer', modern English derivations of Anglo-Saxon words are used to create similar, and often identical, alliterative patterns to the original. Here, 'broad' does not serve the same phonetic purpose that *brædan* does, but Pound recycles it so that it contributes something else to the texture of his poem.

While we cannot say that Pound has translated line 47 of *The Wanderer*, he has raided it to supply himself with some unusual and potent diction. Nor does he stop there. With *bapian* and *feþra* still on his mind, Pound develops his image incrementally by a process of repetition with variation. To work 'feathers' back into the poem ('broading out feathers' does not make sense in the way 'broaden out their wings' would), Pound needs to add some other observation, rather as he added 'brawl' to his earlier experiment. Why

<sup>113</sup> 'Stretched' (sail) is also part of the 'Canto I' lexicon.

do birds stretch their wings? What do they do with them when out-stretched? From his 'fond memory of cheeldhood',<sup>114</sup> Pound recalls watching gulls preen their wings. This is superimposed onto his memory of *The Wanderer*, producing 'nipping between the splay feathers', which, by happy coincidence, introduces an echo of the 'spray' that washes in circles around cliffs near the beginning of the poem. As Pound still wants the detail of sea-birds bathing, he varies 'gulls' with 'snipe', and then repeats the idea of *brædan feþra* twice, using different words each time. After which, these sea-creatures-on-the-verge-of-becoming-air-creatures fade away, having prepared us for transformations of a more spectacular kind.

Visually and aurally, the effects of 'broad' and so on can be felt even if one is unaware of their derivation. If Pound intends the source to be recognised, he expects an awful lot from his reader: but Pound frequently does expect exactly that, and *The Cantos* is the kind of poem which not only allows such connections to be made, but encourages them. After all, *The Wanderer* is a poem which Pound was apt to recommend. In his essay 'The Renaissance', when cataloguing the minimum 'must-have' works of literature with which one can judge 'a classic', he includes 'the *Sea-farer* and one passage out of *The Wanderer*', arguing that:

Some knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon fragments - not particularly the Beowulf - would prevent a man's sinking into contentment with a lot of wish-wash that passes for classic or 'standard' poetry.<sup>115</sup>

It is possible that this one passage out of *The Wanderer* is the one Pound improvises on in 'Canto II', and that he did expect knowledge of it in the well-read student of poetry.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Lindberg-Seyersted, ed., *Pound/Ford*, p. 66.

<sup>115</sup> Eliot, ed., *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 215-6.



So how would the original inform a reading of 'Canto II'? *The Wanderer* is a poem concerned with exile and the travels (at sea) of a man deprived of company and a place within society. These circumstances remind us of Pound's own and, more pertinently, Odysseus's. Another major theme running through *The Wanderer* is the transitory nature of life and human achievements: the speaker moralises on the passing away of brave companions (some in battle) and on the ruins of great buildings and cities. There is a satisfying resonance here with the details of 'Canto I', where Odysseus literally recalls the ghost of his dead friend Elpenor and honours him. In 'Canto II', just a few lines before the *Wanderer*/snipe passage, Helen of Troy is invoked, a city-destroyer ('and doom goes with her'). Moreover, the speaker of the Anglo-Saxon poem sees the sea-birds as he awakes from a dream in which he believed he was back in the comfort of the mead-hall, in the embrace of his friends and lord. The cruelty of the dream is made worse by the way in which the imagined figures of his companions dissolve into the corporeal bodies of the birds at the moment of returning consciousness: a metamorphosis of men into animals.

Much space has been given to this short, transitional and transitory passage, but it is instructive of two things: firstly of the detail in which Pound's Anglo-Saxon studies remained with him years later (the slight inaccuracies of his quotation to Ford indicate he is reliant on memory, not a text); secondly of how he applied that knowledge. To some critics it may seem suspicious that Pound's Anglo-Saxon influences do not make themselves more visible in his early work, published between 1908 and 1917 (when the three Ur-Cantos came out). It is more obvious that he experiments with many forms from

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<sup>116</sup> The only other possibility is lines 15-19, which Pound quoted in *Poetry*, VIII, 3, June 1916; 'The Constant Preaching to the Mob', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 64-5. In any case 'Anglo-Saxon fragments' are obviously required reading.



These two lines bring to a close the passage Pound improvised from *The Wanderer*, creating metamorphic sea-birds to presage the Ovidian passage. In 'Canto XXI' the sun-dazzled sea reflects flames in the air and petals in the wind. Soon the human world again gives way to that of the Gods, specifically the story of Dis and Persephone, from *The Metamorphoses*. We might also recall that in the Saxonised first Canto, Odysseus's journey from the earthly realm into the underworld,<sup>118</sup> takes place after a spectacular sunset over the Mediterranean.<sup>119</sup> This further alerts the reader to a thematic (or at least imagistic) rhyme between the first and the twenty-first cantos. Before leaving the sunset, 'Canto XXI' deploys a striking nautical image: 'The sun's keel freighted with cloud'. The trope expressed by 'keel' and 'freighted' is most apt for a sunset over sea, observed from the centre of a once-great naval power (Venice), but 'keel' is also part of Pound's Saxon lexicon, prominent in both his 'Seafarer' and 'Canto I'. Is its use here purely coincidental or is Pound singing the sound of the North Sea as he presents an image of the Adriatic Sea? Together with 'sun-dazzle', 'keel' seems to form a small Anglo-Saxon knot in the verse. This most intra-textual of poems is sign-posting the reader back to its beginnings, to the metamorphic world of the gods and the voyaging hero.

The voice continues; 'And after that hour, dry darkness': four stressed syllables; a strong mid-line caesura; a rising rhythm countered by a falling rhythm; two different vowels 'alliterating' in the first strophe; two /d/s in the second. Pound's refinement of Anglo-Saxon prosody persists. The next line, 'Floating flame in the air, gonads in organdy' continues the *aa bb* sound-patterning in a falling rhythm (the *b* pattern here is obviously

<sup>117</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, p. 99. Terrell translates the Greek phrase, 'Gignetei kalon', as 'A beautiful thing is born'. See Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to 'The Cantos' of Ezra Pound*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> 'Bust thru from quotidien [sic.] into "divine or permanent world." Gods, etc.' Pound's description of one of the poem's recurring major tropes, from a letter to his father in *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. by D. D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 210.

not strictly alliterative, but there is a clear repetition of /g/, /n/, /d/ and /æ/ sounds in the second half-line). Then the /dr/ motif and the /fl/ are brought together for a half-line, before the alliterative structure gives way to the 'petal borne on the wind': beauty is born[e].

Melopoeia is learnt not only from Provençal, but also Anglo-Saxon. Its rhythmic structure and its head-lettering are heard throughout *The Cantos*, often for only a few lines at a time, as here. Its sound comes and goes like the waves and the tides of the waters of which it frequently tells. When a detail in 'The Seven Lakes Canto' ('Canto LIX') reminds Pound of this Venetian sunset and the Dionysian/Eleusinian fertility myths (fishing boats like 'lanthorns' on water and 'Where wine flag catches sunset / Sparse chimneys smoke in the cross light'),<sup>120</sup> he cannot help but slip into a phrase of his Saxon sea-music. 'Comes then snow scur on the river' is such a refined reference to his 'Seafarer' that it might easily be missed, but 'scur' undoubtedly nods to 'hail-scur flew', which is barely a translation at all of *hægl scurum fleag*.<sup>121</sup> The inversion of 'comes then', to get the verb into the emphatic first position and create a falling rhythm, is also a trick learnt in 'The Seafarer', but now observes enough decorum to dispense with the hammy 'cometh'.

Likewise in 'Canto XL', when Pound relates the West African voyages of exploration undertaken by Hanno the Carthaginian,<sup>122</sup> we hear of his pre-Classical exploits through a music which is weighty in its economy with unstressed syllables and polysyllabic words. Varied rhythmic phrasing is frequently punctuated by the tattoo of consecutive stresses.

<sup>119</sup> 'Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean'. Pound, *Cantos*, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>121</sup> Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 64. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 171 (line 17).

This general terseness is heightened by the omission of many articles and pronoun subjects, most often 'we'; e.g. 'Filled our tanks, sailed 5 days along shore / Came then West Horn'.<sup>123</sup> This technique also creates a rhythmic fall at the start of each phrase. Small, linguistic details refer us to the idiom of 'Canto I': 'seabord' (199), now without hyphen, was first sighted in 'Canto I' (it is also used for the reprise of Odysseus in 'Canto XLVII', 237); and the archaic past form 'clomb' (201) is tacit acknowledgement of the Saxon roots of the verb 'climb' (and of the early date of the event). Hanno's wisdom in exploring and mapping the coast of Africa complements that of the Anglo-Saxon king, Athelstan, who (it is reported in 'Canto XLVIII'), decreed that no man should be made a thane 'who has not made three voyages / going hence off this land into other lands as a merchant' (242).<sup>124</sup> Seas of the North or seas of the South, the outward-looking ruler encourages his people to travel them.

By now Pound is so deft and light-handed in the use of this Saxonised sea-music that it is often blended almost imperceptibly into his melange of styles and idioms. Only occasionally, through clues like 'keel' and 'sun-dazzle', do we become consciously aware of it. In those instances, it is noticeable how often the song is sung in passages of transition: snipe and sun-dazzle move us from Browning and Homer to Dionysus; sun-

<sup>122</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, pp. 199-201.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200. Further references in main body of text.

<sup>124</sup> In fact this was not legislation by Athelstan, but comes from 'A compilation on status (probably 1002-1023)'. Clause six of this treatise states 'And if a trader prospered, that he crossed thrice the open sea at his own expense, he was then afterwards entitled to the rights of a thegn.' *English Historical Documents*, ed. by David C. Douglas and others, 2nd edn, 12 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1979), I, 468-9. This and other similar treatises are preserved in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS. 201, although clause six of this item is only in the *Textus Roffensis*. Benjamin Thorpe apparently included some of these treatises in his 1861 edition of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. I do not know whether Pound could have come across the information there. This compilation (item 51 in *EHD*) has strong associations with Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who may have been its author. Wulfstan's 'Address to the English' (*Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*) is included in Sweet's *Reader*, and if that text (easy and popular for beginners) was studied at Hamilton, it is possible that Ibbotson informed his students of other writing attributed to Wulfstan by way of background. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Julia Smith of the School of Medieval History, University of St. Andrews for kindly providing me with this reference.

dazzle and the sun's keel shift the poem from Jefferson and the Medici to Apollo, Pallas and the Persephone myth. In this manner the local gives way to the permanent: like Venus from the waves (whose Homeric praise hymn emerges from the seafaring verse of 'Canto I'). Birth of beauty is subject-rhymed with petals born on the wind in 'Canto XXI'.

### The Loss of Companions: Lordly Men

There are other uses for Anglo-Saxon in *The Cantos*, as the opening lines of 'Canto XXVII' demonstrate:<sup>125</sup>

Formando di disio nuova persona  
 One man is dead, and another has rotted his end off  
 Et quant au troisième  
 Il est tombé dans le  
 De sa femme, on ne le reverra  
 Pas, oth fugol othbaer:<sup>126</sup>

This collage lays together four languages; mediaeval Italian, modern English, modern French and some not-quite-remembered Anglo-Saxon. The correct wording is *sumne fugel opbaer* ('one a bird bore away') from line 81 of *The Wanderer*.<sup>127</sup> The source of the Italian is line seventeen of Cavalcanti's 'Ballata 12', which Pound had translated in 1910.<sup>128</sup> As to the French, no source or reference appears to have been yet identified. Whether Pound fashioned these lines himself or lifted them from another text is probably now unknowable.

<sup>125</sup> Some of the following material is to be published in *Paideuma* in 2003 as 'One a bird bore off: Anglo-Saxon and the elegiac in *The Cantos*'.

<sup>126</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, p.129. I translate: 'Fashioning a new person from desire / One man is dead, another has rotted his end off / And as to the third, he fell into the / ...of his wife, you won't see him / again, one a bird bore off.'

<sup>127</sup> Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 162. If Pound intended to emend *sumne* to A-S. *op*, then his line would read 'until a bird bore off'. William Cookson says that the line was *Sumne fugol othbaer* in British editions of *The Cantos* until 1976, when Faber adopted the American text, which introduced a number of errors. Pound's *fugol* for *fugel* is an acceptable variant spelling, even if *The Wanderer* does not attest it. William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 2nd edn (London: Anvil, 1985, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>128</sup> Ezra Pound, *Translations* (London: Faber, 1953), pp. 124-7.



The thread that seems to run through this opening bricolage is the disappearance or demise of individuals. 'Ballata 12', is also known by its opening line which Pound translates 'If all my life be but some deathly moving'. The poem expresses a love-sickness so strong that the poet feels himself to be in a state of living death. The emphasis on mortality becomes clearer and more literal in the second line of this canto. Syntactically, this line is reminiscent of the formulaic pattern used by the *Wanderer*-poet to list the fates of men who died in battle (*sume...*, *sumne...*: 'one man..., another...'). It is this same passage (lines 80b-84b) which includes the phrase *sumne fugel opbær*.

By the knowing lacuna where that part of his wife into which the man fell ought to be, the lines in French are bawdy in tone, rather than elegiac. Nevertheless the disappearance of 'the third one' is as irreversible as death, reminding us that in the French language sexual climax, *le petit mort*, is a metaphorical death. Is it this *troisième*, or yet another who is borne away by the wanderer's bird? In any case, in the Anglo-Saxon poem to which Pound alludes, the speaker 'lose[s] all companions';<sup>129</sup> is stripped, one by one, of his fellow warriors until he remains: the last survivor. The subject rhyme with Odysseus is clear, and, with the benefit of hindsight with Pound too, although it may not have been so clear in 1927. Some forty or so years later however, having been through the wars both literally and metaphorically, Pound mourned the passing of yet another of his old companions (Eliot) with the plaintive 'who is there now for me to share a joke with?'<sup>130</sup> The pitiful similarity to Odysseus and the speaker of *The Wanderer* was more apparent.

<sup>129</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> John Tytell, *Ezra Pound: The Solitary Volcano* (London: Bloomsbury, 1987), p. 336.

Perhaps less obvious is the development of the subject within 'Canto XXVII', for after the bird carries someone away (it is a carrion-bird in *The Wanderer*), Pound presents the reader with British preparations for the Great War: a war in which one soldier, and another, and another will be taken away in battle. Curiously, the *fugel* in line 81 of *The Wanderer* has also been glossed as 'ship', initially by Benjamin Thorpe (editor of *The Exeter Book* in 1842) and more recently by Krapp and Dobbie (in 1936, after the composition of this canto).<sup>131</sup> It may seem unlikely that Pound would have known of Thorpe's suggestion, but in the St. Andrews University Library copy of the seventh edition of Sweet's *Reader* (the same edition Pound used), a student has pencilled a marginal gloss to this line of 'The Wanderer': 'fig. = 'ship' (Thorpe) cf. Beow. 218.'<sup>132</sup> The glossator has been told of Thorpe's theory that the sea-bird is a metaphor for a ship, and for supporting evidence, has been referred to line 218 of *Beowulf* in which the Geats' ship is likened to a bird.<sup>133</sup> This interpretation of *fugel* clearly had currency in universities for a long time after Thorpe's edition. It is therefore also possible that Pound is courting such a metamorphosis of bird to vessel in his poem: following the *fugel* in 'Canto XXVII' are Royal Navy cruisers, which are being readied to bear men away to their deaths.<sup>134</sup>

The use to which Pound puts *The Wanderer* in this passage demonstrates that it is not merely in singing the sea-surge that he finds Anglo-Saxon an expedient resource. Many of the poems in the traditional Anglo-Saxon canon have been described as elegiac, in

<sup>131</sup> See *The Wanderer*, ed. by Roy Leslie, 2nd edn (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1985), p. 88.

<sup>132</sup> St. Andrews University Library copy of the seventh edition of Sweet's *Reader*, p. 163. This was presented to the library in 1956, after having at least one previous user. It was printed in 1894.

<sup>133</sup> The original text is *flota famiheals fuge gelicost*. *Beowulf*, p. 41. William Morris famously translated the line as 'the foamy-necked floater being most like to a bird'.

<sup>134</sup> 'Observed that the paint was / Three quarters of an inch thick and concluded, / As they were being rammed through, the age of that / Cruiser'. Pound, *Cantos*, p. 129. See also Terrell's note, *A Companion to The Cantos*, p. 110.

particular those which Pound found most attractive. That Pound made use of the elegiac strain of Anglo-Saxon in *The Cantos* is not news. The self-quotation of 'Lordly men are to earth o'ergiven' (from 'The Seafarer') is how Pound pays his respects to those of his companions who had passed away by the time he was composing the first Pisan Canto.<sup>135</sup>

What is not yet understood is both the extent to which Pound deploys this Saxon elegiac tone, and how early it can be found in his epic. The part played by *The Wanderer* in the opening of 'Canto XXVII' is one piece of evidence that argues for a reappraisal, but it is by no means a solitary one. The first companion to be lost in *The Cantos* is Elpenor: the Saxonised 'Canto I' is, in part, his elegy.<sup>136</sup> Viewed in this light, Pound's Saxonist poetic is entirely in accord with the rest of his practice: one only has to think of 'Cathay', 'A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska' and 'Maunderley' to realise that Pound was, in large part, an elegist from an early stage of his career.

Pound develops this *fugol* trope in the following 'Canto XXVIII'. As it draws to a close the poem introduces a collection of trans-Atlantic pilots:

And lest it pass with the day's news  
 Thrown out with the daily paper,  
 Neither official pet  
 Nor Levine with the lucky button  
 Went on into darkness,  
 Saw naught above but close dark,  
 Weight of ice on the fuselage  
 Borne into the tempest, black cloud wrapping their wings,  
 The night hollow beneath them  
 And fell with dawn into ocean  
 But for the night saw neither sky nor ocean

<sup>135</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, p. 446. Pound also repeats *sumne fugol othbaer* in The Pisan Cantos ('Canto LXXVII', p. 481), after millions more have been taken away by another war. Specifically, the phrase comes after the death of Padre José, who had once helped Pound obtain a photostat of a Cavalcanti Manuscript. See *Guide To Kulchur*, p. 158.

<sup>136</sup> Gugelberger also deals with the elegiac strain of *The Cantos*, in connection with Pound's use of Middle English. His argument centres on the Chaucerian 'compleynt of Artemis' ('Canto XXX'), in which he brilliantly argues that for Pound, nostalgia for what has passed is the same sentiment as nostalgia for language. The same insight can be applied to Pound's use of Anglo-Saxon of course. Gugelberger, *Pound's Medievalism*, pp. 130-1.

And found ship... why?... how?... by the Azores.  
 And she was a bathing beauty, Miss Arkansas or Texas  
 And the man (of course) quasi anonymous  
 Neither a placard for non-smokers or non-alcohol  
 Nor for the code of Peoria;  
 Or one-eyed Hinchcliffe and Elsie  
 Blackeyed bitch that married dear Dennis,  
 That flew out into nothingness  
 And her father was the son of one too  
 That got the annulment.<sup>137</sup>

'Miss Arkansas' is identified by Terrell as probably being Ruth Elder from Alabama, who, in 1927, attempted to fly from New York to Europe. She and her unrespectable co-pilot were forced off-course and had to land in the sea near the Azores, having weathered a storm for two days. Pound briefly juxtaposes her with Levine and 'the official pet' (Terrell suggests Lindbergh); two successful ocean-crossing aviators. However, it is Ruth Elder's lost craft, beset by epic difficulties that particularly interests Pound and dominates this twenty-one line passage, before giving way to two more ill-fated travellers. Walter Hinchcliffe and Elsie Mackay took off for America from an airport in Lincolnshire on 13 March 1928: neither was heard of again.

That these ocean-crossing travellers are twentieth-century Ulyssean voyagers is apparent. They are types of Odysseus, or of his companions; repeats from 'Canto I' where this part of the poem's palette was established. Certainly their endeavours might seem more trivial than those of Homeric legend: these are contemporary Odysseuses. Yet Pound is keen that they are remembered, 'lest it pass with the day's news'. There are heroic trials in modern life which rise above the level of the voyeuristic journalism which records and debases them. Pound notes how the press are entirely uninterested in Elder's male co-pilot and, by portraying her as a 'bathing beauty', he suggests that the journalistic interest barely rises above the desire to titillate (also making her a contemporary Venus of course,

born of the waves). Hinchcliffe and Mackay, unlike Lindbergh, don't even merit a placard. By placing them in his poem, Pound hopes to memorialise their heroic tribulations and save them from the trivia of the twentieth-century press.

Not only are these aviators variations on the Homeric archetype; they are also wanderers; seafarers whose loss is mourned. As the opening of the previous canto reflects on the literal or metaphorical disappearance of individuals, so the close of this canto remembers those who are lost at sea, either temporarily or permanently. There is an ambiguity about Elder's vehicle: it is not clear whether it lands on the water because it actually is a seaplane, or because necessity forced it to become one. Is a plane which lands on the water a craft of the air, or craft of the sea, or both? The sea-fowl of Pound's 'Seafarer' are recalled, as are the Saxon snipe of 'Canto II' who shift form as they shift medium. So too the attentive reader might briefly reconsider the previous canto's *fugel*: is it a bird, or a ship? Or perhaps now a fuselage?

As this passage gains momentum Pound gradually builds the Anglo-Saxon musculature of his 'Canto I' idiom into the verse. An archaism in the first line, 'lest' is the first hint of this, although archaism is used with greater restraint than previously. The fourth line introduces the 'nor' that was earlier identified as part of Pound's Saxon syntax. This too is less noticeable, set up naturally by the 'neither' of the third line, but by now we are being propelled forward as the Saxonisms gain weight. The next two lines open emphatically with the finite verb in first position. This feature, enabled by the postponement of the verbs after the twin subjects of this negative sentence (Levine and the official pet), is also reminiscent of 'Canto I' ('Set keel to breakers', 'bore sheep aboard

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<sup>137</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, pp. 139-40.

her') and employs a kind of variation on the subjects. Alliteration builds across lines rather than within them, as 'cloud' echoes 'close', 'wings' picks up 'weight' and then, in the longest line, beats start to alliterate more densely: 'black' follows 'borne', 'night' is followed by 'neath', and together they reiterate 'naught' (another archaism, used in Pound's 'Seafarer'), just as 'dawn' recalls 'dark'. Using alliteration more flexibly, to strengthen the sinews of the verse, to make the language denser, rather than as an organising metrical principle is again in accord with the style Pound refines in 'Canto I'. The divorce of verbs from their subject becomes a more noticeable feature as 'Borne' (which is another 'Canto I' word) and 'fell' are so far from the head of the sentence that the reader might easily forget that these problems are what did not befall the lucky Levine and Lindbergh. Ice grips these seafarers, just as it did the seafarer and the 'icy feathers' of the birds in Pound's translation. Even some of the articles are characteristically omitted as the verse becomes more terse and laconically elegiac (e.g. 'weight of ice' and 'fell with dawn into ocean').

The style dissolves as gradually as it was worked up. It leaves us by way of another neither/nor parallel construction and some more half-hearted alliteration ('bathing beauty', 'blackeyed bitch', 'dear Dennis') and then, like the lost voyagers, it is gone. Pound has woven a brief, saxon-like elegiac passage to memorialise the trials of these latter-day seafarers. Some (as well as 'one') a bird bore off.

#### At the Centre of Pound's Poetic: *The Seafarer* as the West on a Par with the Orient

There are other instances in *The Cantos* where Pound draws on Anglo-Saxon style or specific poems. Rather than examine them all in detail, this chapter will finish by



considering more generally what Anglo-Saxon means to Pound's overall poetic.<sup>138</sup> As late as 1951, Pound still holds *The Seafarer* in the first rank of world literature:

I once got a man to start translating the *Seafarer* into Chinese. It came out almost directly into Chinese verse, with two solid ideograms in each half-line. Apart from the *Seafarer* I know no other European poems of the period that you can hang up with the 'Exile's Letter' of Li Po, displaying the West on a par with the Orient.<sup>139</sup>

The specific comparison with the 'Exile's Letter' is for evident reasons: the two poems share a similar theme and tone, and Pound thought them more or less contemporary, dating both to the eighth century. Pound's palpable excitement with the results of his commission needs a little more explication. The chief interest of this, possibly apocryphal, story lies in Pound's approval of the apparent equivalence of the Anglo-Saxon half-line and two Chinese ideograms. That is to say, the parallel is partly syntactic.<sup>140</sup> To understand the significance for Pound of this 'discovery', it is necessary to understand what he valued about Chinese poetry and its 'ideogrammic' method.

The most important documents in this respect are the Fenollosa papers which Pound edited, partly re-wrote, and had published as 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry'.<sup>141</sup> Central to Fenollosa's understanding of Chinese language and poetry (and to his influence on Pound), is the belief that in Chinese there exists a more intimate and immediate relationship between language and nature than in most occidental

<sup>138</sup> A number of Anglo-Saxon allusions remain. In 'Canto XCI', Pound quotes from Layamon's *Brut* (which some would call early Middle English, but it has often been called late Anglo-Saxon), in particular parts of the *Brut* dealing with King Athelstan (*Cantos*, pp. 626-7). 'Canto XCVI' mentions 'ALDFRID, King of Northumbria' and 'Aldhelm' (668). 'Canto XCVII' includes kings Offa, Alfred, Athelstan, Canute and Edgar and quotes again from Layamon (684). Similar allusions to Anglo-Saxon history are made in 'Canto CV' (762-5) and Bede is mentioned in 'Canto CVII' (774). I make no attempt to list all the remaining thematic and stylistic reprises of Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>139</sup> Pound, *ABC of Reading*, p. 51.

<sup>140</sup> Kenner points out that one ideogram corresponds to a syllabic group with one accent in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1951), p. 141. An early twentieth-century theorist of prosody (and English professor at Texas), wrote that in Anglo-Saxon poetry, 'a thought-moment is made to coincide with every sum of two stressed syllables'. Mark H. Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study of English Poetry* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), pp. 88-9.

languages. Specifically, Fenollosa believes that the syntax of Chinese written characters is born out of an innate syntax of the natural world: 'the sentence form was forced upon primitive men by nature itself. It was not we who made it; it was a reflection of the temporal order in causation'.<sup>142</sup> The appeal to primitivism here is entirely of a kind with that made by the Victorian philologists and Saxonists in their pursuit of linguistic roots.<sup>143</sup> 'Unsophisticated' languages, distant in time or geography to *fin de siècle* westerners, are more in touch with physical and natural reality than our own. Fenollosa makes a partial exception of English, which shares something of this fidelity to natural process: 'the form of the Chinese transitive sentence, and of the English (omitting particles), exactly corresponds to this universal form of action in nature' (13). One might characterise Anglo-Saxon as an English omitting particles, or at least it can do with far fewer articles and preposition than modern English can: this reduction to bare, linguistic essentials accounts for similarity, at a certain level, between word-for-word translations of Anglo-Saxon and Chinese poetry. Of more importance, however, is the order in which the words fall. Like Chinese, the *Seafarer's* syntax, and so the thought governing the syntax, is apparently true to the laws of the natural world. The Chinese character for 'spring' is a pictographic representation of 'the sun underlying the bursting forth of plants' (10): 'bosque taketh blossom' and 'fields to fairness'.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, ed. by Ezra Pound (San Francisco: City Lights, 1936). Fenollosa's widow gave Pound her husband's papers in 1913, scarcely two years after he had first published 'The Seafarer' in *The New Age*. See Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 197.

<sup>142</sup> Fenollosa, *Chinese Written Character*, p. 12. Further references in main body of the text.

<sup>143</sup> In Chinese, Fenollosa finds exactly that quality which Marsh claimed belonged to Anglo-Saxon; a flexibility of parts of speech: 'we can see, not only the forms of sentences, but literally the parts of speech growing up, budding forth one from another. Like nature, the Chinese words are alive and plastic, because *thing* and *action* are not formally separated.' Fenollosa, *The Chinese Character*, p. 17. According to Kenner, in notes which remained unpublished in Pound's possession, Fenollosa also wrote 'we should find the whole theory of evolution (which our selfcentered Aryan consciousness afterwards forgot) lying concrete in our etymologies'. A memo reminds himself to 'give examples from Skeat'; the eminent philologist of mediaeval English. Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 106.

<sup>144</sup> Lines from 'The Seafarer'. Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 65.

The idea of a syntax pared-down to its nuts and bolts appeals so much to Fenollosa that he reiterates it as one of his key requisites for good writing: 'frequently it is possible by omitting English particles to make a literal word-for-word translation which will be not only intelligible in English, but even the strongest and most poetical English' (p. 16).

Prepositions are necessary only as a result of linguistic enervation, particularly a lack of verbal force. They are required to reinvigorate intransitive verbs, which are, for Fenollosa, faded shadows of former transitive verbs and responsible for the overuse of the copula in English. Verbal impotence and an excess of particles are part of the same problem:

Prepositions are so important, so pivotal in European speech only because we have weakly yielded up the force of our intransitive verbs. We have to add small supernumerary words to bring back the original power. We still say 'I see a horse', but with the weak verb 'look' we have to add the directive particle 'at' before we can restore the natural transitiveness. (19-20)

Poetry must seek to cut out every superfluous lexical item in an effort to ensure its force is distilled to the maximum: 'poetic thought works by suggestion, crowding maximum meaning into the single phrase pregnant, charged, and luminous from within' (28). An inflected language need not rely on prepositions for its force, and although Anglo-Saxon makes use of both prepositions and inflections in its syntax, it is true that it can express itself much more sparsely in this respect than its modern descendent.<sup>145</sup>

Two years before he read Fenollosa, Pound had only partly grasped the usefulness of this trait in Anglo-Saxon. The verbal weakness of 'chill its chains are' might not have met with Fenollosa's approval and he would have probably found the preposition redundant in 'chafing sighs / hew my heart round'.<sup>146</sup> We must assume that, in 'The Seafarer', the excision of the occasional article or pronoun in an impersonal construction ('snoweth

from north' is an example of both), is an incidental feature rather than a deliberate ploy. By the time of 'Canto I' and 'Canto II', this potential for a primitive linguistic economy has been capitalised on: the copula 'there were' is suppressed from 'shadows o'er all the ocean',<sup>147</sup> and much of the second canto. Just before the snipe 'come for their bath', we are told that Tyro and Helen of Troy are entwined within the lithe sinews of water.<sup>148</sup> The waves do not 'cover them over', but, in a transformation of noun into verb which dispatches all particles, 'the blue-gray glass of the wave *tents* them' (my italics). Throughout both cantos, pronouns and articles are frequently omitted where context makes the sense clear: the maximum meaning is forced from the minimum linguistic material (reminding us that that roots of imagism were in orientalism).

Fenollosa's argument does not rest on syntax, but is based equally on the single word and the linguistic sign: 'Chinese notation is based upon something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature' (8). Signs are not arbitrary, but extensions of the things they describe, and the etymological heritage of this relationship is visibly displayed in Chinese pictographic characters, rather than silently erased as in western languages. This is what makes the language (Fenollosa and Pound argue) inherently poetic; there is an in-built concreteness.

Fenollosa is particularly interested in this aspect of compound words, arguing that:

...this concrete *verb* quality, both in nature and in the Chinese signs, becomes far more striking and poetic when we pass from such simple, original pictures to compounds. In this process of compounding, two things added together do not produce a third thing, but suggest some fundamental relation between them. [...] A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in

<sup>145</sup> This is also true of some other languages Pound knew, such as Latin. However, one can forge a seemingly new poetic language in English using words and syntax largely (or even solely) of Anglo-Saxon origin: the same is not true of words of Latin (or Greek) origin.

<sup>146</sup> Pound, *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 64.

<sup>147</sup> Pound, *Cantos*, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots. (10)

As described here, compounding is highly analogous to the technique of classic imagism, whereby two things are added together to suggest some fundamental relation between them: it is the dynamic between elements which is significant, and the reader's intelligence is co-opted to enact this dynamism. The development of this idea toward the end of the above quotation emphasises that this is not a static function. Things and their signs are made meaningful through the constant interplay of 'concrete verb quality' which animates them. If this sounds like Pound's own modification of imagism with his adoption of the vortex, it should not surprise: the influence of the Fenollosa papers on Pound's thinking was immense.<sup>149</sup> To my ear, even the self-revision of 'terminal points' to 'meeting-points' is echoed by Pound's modified definition of the new poetic as something 'from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing'.<sup>150</sup>

Implicit in Fenollosa's concept of the Chinese compound (or at least as Pound edits Fenollosa) are the techniques of imagism (and vorticism). So too is Anglo-Saxon kenning.<sup>151</sup> Classic kennings in Anglo-Saxon poetry compound two elements which suggest a third by force of a mutual relationship. 'Whale-path' adds two things together, resulting in a meeting-point of actions.<sup>152</sup> 'Sea' is signified by the relationship between the two concrete elements: the kenning is a radiant node, from, through and into which

<sup>149</sup> Two years after Pound received the Fenollosa papers, the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska was killed, and Pound began *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*, a vorticist manifesto which crystallized his aesthetic theories of the previous two or three years. Ezra Pound, *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*, 2nd edn (New York: New Directions, 1916, 1970).

<sup>150</sup> Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 92.

<sup>151</sup> Kenner saw this and mentions it in a throwaway aside; '(the 'kenning' is ideogram: flesh-cover, whale-road)'. His observation has not been taken up or developed by other writers. Kenner, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, p. 140.

<sup>152</sup> From line 63 of 'The Seafarer'.



the reader's intelligence must rush to make the necessary bridges. If a *scop* places 'breast' and 'hoard' side by side, or 'footprint' and 'word', what relationship will the reader's (or translator's) intelligence divine?<sup>153</sup> At any rate, intelligence is guaranteed to be engaged, and the abstract concepts of 'emotions' and 'reputation' are grounded in the physical. Thought of in these terms, the operation of the Anglo-Saxon kenning is close to that of Pound's favourite ideogram, rose+cherry+iron rust+flamingo=red.<sup>154</sup>

'Primitive' signifiers are therefore nearer to their signifieds and it is the poet's job to recapture this concrete aspect of language, if necessary by recourse to 'primitive' languages: 'poetry only does consciously what the primitive races did unconsciously. The chief work of literary men in dealing with language, and of poets especially, lies in feeling back along the ancient lines of advance'.<sup>155</sup> Intellectually, Pound's whole career is a feeling back along ancient lines of advance and this necessitates not only the incorporation of the Chinese ideogram into his poetic, but also the reanimation of the earliest form of English (as well as the use of ancient Greek and the earliest, vernacular Romance poetry). Making the etymology of language visible is one of the chief methods of this feeling back along ancient lines: 'only scholars and poets feel painfully back along the thread of our etymologies and piece together our diction, as best they may, from forgotten fragments'.<sup>156</sup> For Pound, a vor-text of poetic language founded on Chinese and Anglo-Saxon is the best defence against the 'vulgar misuse of the moment' and 'late stage of decay'<sup>157</sup> of contemporary European languages.

<sup>153</sup> *Breosthord* and *lastworda* from lines 55 and 73 respectively of *The Seafarer*.

<sup>154</sup> Pound, *ABC of Reading*, p. 22.

<sup>155</sup> Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character*, p. 23. Feeling back along the lines of this 'realist' linguistic argument, Pound finds in Fenollosa, what Fenollosa found in Emerson, which in turn came from Horne Tooke. For Hopkins the line of descent is from Horne Tooke to Emerson to Trench and Marsh. Anticipating all is Plato's *Cratylus*.

<sup>156</sup> Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character*, p. 24.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*



### Auden and 'the Barbaric Poetry of the North': unchaining one's daimon

In Auden's 'commonplace book', *A Certain World*, compiled in 1970 as the poet approached old age, there is an entry devoted to 'Anglo-Saxon Poetry'. Auden reproduces there Michael Alexander's translation of *Deor*: 'one of my favourites'.<sup>1</sup> Auden also records that Anglo-Saxon was his 'first introduction to the "barbaric" poetry of the North', despite being eventually superseded in his affections by 'the best poems of the Elder Edda', which he had recently translated, together with help from Paul Taylor.<sup>2</sup> Hungry for new forms, the young Auden was attracted by the exoticism of Anglo-Saxon. He recalled that 'I was immediately fascinated both by its metric and its rhetorical devices, so different from the post-Chaucerian poetry with which I was familiar'. It will not surprise that Auden, interested in prosodic technique of every sort, found much of value in this respect. That the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon verse was of use to him is less obvious, although it became a key resource in Auden's technical repertoire. His importance to this study is that he is the first conscious Saxoniser to be widely accepted within the mainstream of British poetic tradition and to hand back to that tradition an Anglo-Saxon poetic which does not call great attention to itself (although this was not achieved until the middle of his career). Part of the explanation for this is to be found in Auden's education.

Auden's first encounter with this 'barbaric poetry of the North' was at Oxford. In 1925, Auden went up to Christ Church to read Biology, switching to English in the summer of

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Auden, *A Certain World: A Commonplace Book*, (London: Faber, 1971), pp. 22-4.

<sup>2</sup> A selection of these appeared in 1969 as *Elder Edda*. A complete volume was not published in Auden's lifetime. *Norse Poems*, trans. by W. H. Auden and Paul Taylor, 2nd edn (London: Faber, 1983), p. vii.

1926.<sup>3</sup> The latter event took place fifty-nine years after Hopkins had graduated from the same university and sixteen years after Pound had ended his formal relationship with academia. English Studies had undergone considerable change during this period. In Hopkins's day Oxford had not offered a degree in English: the first examination in the subject was held in 1896.<sup>4</sup> For Pound, Anglo-Saxon was still a specialist subject, reserved mainly for postgraduate study. Auden is the first poet under consideration to receive a university education which would have been familiar to most British students of English during the twentieth century. Anglo-Saxon literature had secured itself a cornerstone position in English Studies, although towards the end of the century it was to lose this prominence in the curriculum at many institutions. Auden, however, could take its presence at the beginning of the canon more or less for granted.

This difference in education is evident in the almost cavalier fashion in which Auden exploits Anglo-Saxonisms in his early poetry. Hopkins, drawn to the doctrine of native vocabulary and writing a poetry affected by the ideal of Anglo-Saxon purity, could only speculate that the earliest English poetry might be worth further investigation. Just ten years before Auden went to Oxford, Pound was making a radical gesture by publishing his translation of *The Seafarer* sandwiched between translations of ancient Chinese poetry. Chinoiserie, unlike Anglo-Saxon, was fashionable in the literary salons of pre-war Europe and the imagist juxtaposition of texts in *Cathay* was a deliberate ploy to emphasize the worth of the Anglo-Saxon poem. By contrast, with the benefit of his Oxford Eng. Lit. education, Auden peppered his earliest poems with parodies of, and references to, Anglo-Saxon poems with the expectation that other bright young things would be able to recognise them.

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<sup>3</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden, A Biography* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 45 & 52-3.

### Auden at Oxford

Auden's reminiscences of studying Anglo-Saxon at Oxford are well documented. His enthusiasm for the subject was not set alight by the approach of C. L. Wrenn, his main tutor: 'Wrenn was so much a philologist that he couldn't read anything beyond the words'.<sup>5</sup> The remark is hardly a just one, as Wrenn's sympathetic introduction to *Beowulf* as a literary experience attests.<sup>6</sup> Nor should we place too much trust in a judgement made forty-four years after graduation by a poet with reason to be defensive about his academic achievement. Auden's retrospective criticism of Wrenn may be self-justification for spectacular failure in his final examinations, for, to the great surprise of his contemporaries, Auden received a third-class degree. After the Anglo-Saxon paper he had been found in tears by fellow-student, Bill McElwee.<sup>7</sup>

The Second Public Examination in English, set in Trinity 1928, consisted of fifteen papers and a variety of special subject options.<sup>8</sup> The first four papers are entirely linguistic ('Gothic and Old Icelandic Philology', 'Old English Philology', 'Middle English Philology' and 'History of the Language'). The fifth paper was divided into two, suggesting there was a choice between 'Old English Texts (a)', and 'Old English Texts (b)'. Presumably it was one of these papers which reduced Auden to tears. Although slightly more literary than the 'Old English Philology' paper, 'Old English Texts' nevertheless poses questions such as: 'What do you know of any differences between the first and second hand in the *Beowulf* MS, in respect of forms and spellings used, liability

<sup>4</sup> D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> From an unpublished interview with Robert H. Boyer, 11 January 1972, quoted in Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> *Beowulf and the Finnesburg Fragment*, trans by John R. Clark Hall, 3rd edn, rev. by C. L. Wrenn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 1-19.

<sup>7</sup> Although Spender attributed the weeping to extreme tiredness. Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> *Oxford University Examination Papers, Trinity Term 1928: Second Public Examination, Honour School of English Language and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928).

to error, and general characteristics?' (Paper V(a), q. 5); 'How do you account for the general dialectal colouring of the text of (a) *Beowulf*, (b) the *Wanderer* and *Seafarer* as they have come down to us?' (Paper V(a), q. 11); 'Give examples (a) of spellings and forms in Old English texts that indicate an *early* date, (b) of features of the language or poetical texts that are derived from other dialects than West Saxon.' (Paper V(b), q. 6); as well as questions on the historical forms of specific words, the reconstruction of Anglo-Saxon pronunciation, the relevance of *i*-mutation to Anglo-Saxon grammar, and translation into Anglo-Saxon (Paper V(b), qs. 3, 7, 8 & 11). A student who considered philological abilities to be an impediment to reading poetry (as Auden seemed to in the 1972 Boyer interview) is unlikely to have equipped himself to cope with a 'literature' paper that asks questions such as these. Auden doomed himself to failure by not playing his examiners' game.

Nor did he profess (again with hindsight) to be engaged by J. R. R. Tolkien's lectures on Anglo-Saxon poetry, remarking, 'I do not remember a single word he said'.<sup>9</sup> Yet it was Tolkien who first fired his passion for Anglo-Saxon: 'at a certain point he recited, and magnificently, a long passage of *Beowulf*. I was spellbound. This poetry, I knew, was going to be my dish.'<sup>10</sup> The spell endured long after Auden had left Oxford. In 1962 he acknowledged: 'Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry have been one of my strongest, most lasting influences'.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, mutual admiration between poet and Oxford don grew deeper until their deaths, both in September 1973. Auden celebrated Tolkien's seventieth birthday with 'A Short Ode to a Philologist' (published in a volume co-edited by the same Wrenn who was 'so much a philologist' that he couldn't read the poetry), and

<sup>9</sup> W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and other essays* (London: Faber, 1963), p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*.

on Auden's sixtieth birthday Tolkien replied with an original composition in Anglo-Saxon (with facing translation), dedicated to 'Wystan my friend'.<sup>12</sup> Tolkien was important to Auden's development not only in introducing him to Anglo-Saxon poetry, but in offering examples of how contemporary poetry could draw on mediaeval verse as an alternative model. Carl Phelpstead argues that the alliterative revival enacted at Oxford by Tolkien and the other Inklings (who included among their number, Neville Coghill, Auden's own personal tutor) was crucial in legitimising the use of early English verse as an exemplar for Auden. Where Auden differs from Tolkien and the Inklings is in his marriage of mediaeval forms to modern material and concerns.<sup>13</sup>

The strength with which the magic of Tolkien's performance gripped Auden's imagination surprised many of his contemporaries. Betjeman later recalled, with a mixture of feigned shock and distaste, how Auden 'really admired the boring Anglo-Saxon poets like Beowulf [*sic*] whom we had read in the English school'.<sup>14</sup> The remark illustrates how unconventional it still was to feel that Anglo-Saxon possessed anything a young poet could learn from. Geoffrey Grigson recalls that the first Auden poem he saw ('in the *Cherwell* perhaps?') was a re-telling of an episode from *Beowulf*.<sup>15</sup> Grigson connects this interest in Anglo-Saxon with a sense of 'Englishness' not previously expressed in contemporary poetry. It certainly indicates the belonging to an unbroken English tradition, stretching back further than was usual; an English tradition larger than the imagination of Betjeman.

<sup>12</sup> Paul E. Szarmach, 'Anthem: Auden's *Cædmon's Hymn*' in *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman*, ed. by Richard Utz and Tom Shippey (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 329-40, (pp. 338-9).

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Carl Phelpstead, unpublished research presented as 'Auden and the Inklings: An Alliterative Revival' at 'After the Middle Ages: Modern Responses to Medieval Texts', a conference held at University of Wales, Cardiff, 18 November 2000.

<sup>14</sup> *W. H. Auden: A Tribute*, ed. by Stephen Spender (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Grigson, 'A Meaning of Auden', in *Auden: A Tribute*, pp. 13-25 (p. 13-14).

### Wystan the Viking

Auden's life-long interest in Northern Germanic poetry was nourished by his Oxford education, but pre-dates it considerably; in some ways it can be seen as his birth-right. Wystan Hugh was born in 1907, in Bootham, Yorkshire,<sup>16</sup> a town whose name preserves an unusual dative plural ending.<sup>17</sup> His father, Dr. George Auden, was something of an amateur antiquarian: in 1906 he had edited the *Historical and Scientific Survey of York and District*, published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and he was particularly interested in Saxon and Norse antiquities.<sup>18</sup> George had attended Repton School in Derbyshire, whose parish church is dedicated to the Mercian prince St. Wystan, of whom Wystan H. Auden later wrote: 'he objected to the uncanonical marriage of his widowed mother to his godfather, whereupon they bumped him off. A rather Hamlet-like story.'<sup>19</sup> It was after this saint that George Auden named his third son 'Wystan'. No doubt the poet was later delighted to learn that in *The Battle of Maldon* a warrior called *Wistan* gives good account of himself in that fateful encounter (lines 297ff.).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, George believed the family name to be derived from that of Auðun skötkull, one of the first Norse settlers to colonise Iceland, and he told this story to Wystan,

<sup>16</sup> Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> From Old Norse, *búðum* (mid-late twelfth century), 'at the (market) booths'. Eilert Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 52. I am grateful to Paul Bibire, formerly of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge for pointing this out to me. Bibire thinks the dative plural ending (Anglo-Saxon or Old Norse) may be unique in British place-names; certainly extremely rare. Ekwall's prefatory matter does not mention dative endings in Scandinavian elements, although he treats place-names with genitive endings, which are common (pp. xxiv-xxv).

<sup>18</sup> Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Auden, *Certain World*, p. 331.

<sup>20</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 15. Paul Bibire has also informed me that 'Auden was apparently also rather vain about the fact (apparent or real) that Wystan is OE *Weohstan*, ON *Væsteinn*, meaning '(heathen) sanctuary stone', 'altar-stone'. This information comes anecdotally from Paul Beekman Taylor' (pers. comm.). *Weohstan* (or *Weoxstan*), is also the father of the heroic *Wiglaf*, as Wystan would have found when he started to study *Beowulf*. See line 2602 in *Beowulf: A Student Edition*, ed. by George Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 179.



along with legendary tales from Norse mythology.<sup>21</sup> Despite the possible inaccuracy of his father's information,<sup>22</sup> one can see how, from birth, Auden was conditioned to feel a deep sense of personal attachment to ancient, northern European culture. This was strengthened during childhood by his own reading. In old age Auden could still recall that Morris and Magnusson's *Icelandic Stories* was a favourite of his nursery library.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, at eight years of age, he encountered one of the central legends of the Germanic world when his mother taught him the words to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, which they would sing together as a duet; she as Tristan, he as Isolde.<sup>24</sup> Oxford fostered a love which his parents had already inculcated in Auden.

#### 'Paid on Both Sides'

This abiding love of Germanic antiquities is acknowledged in Auden's earliest professionally published work, 'Paid on Both Sides'. This (mostly verse) play, or 'charade' as the title-page has it, was drafted in Auden's final year at Oxford, perhaps at the expense of his studies. Two years later (1930), having been extensively re-written in Berlin, it was published in Eliot's *Criterion*.<sup>25</sup> The title alludes to lines from *Beowulf*, although very few readers can have been aware of this. Certainly John Fuller, observant as he is, did not record the debt in his *Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden*,<sup>26</sup> although the

<sup>21</sup> Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 7. 'Auden Skötkull' turns in his coffin at his son's frivolity in 'Letter to Lord Byron', W. H. Auden, *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1977), p. 173.

<sup>22</sup> Reaney authoritatively records 'Auden' as a variant of 'Alden' and offers two possible derivations: that the name is Anglo-Scandinavian, *Healfdene* ('Half-dane'); or that the name is Anglo-Saxon, *Ealdwine* ('Old-friend'). P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 4 & 15.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Osborne, *W. H. Auden, The Life of a Poet* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. xiii - xiv.

<sup>26</sup> John Fuller, *A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970).

reference is dealt with in some detail in his 1998 revision and expansion of the *Reader*, *W. H. Auden: A Commentary*.<sup>27</sup>

In *Beowulf*, after the hero has dispatched the monster Grendel, Grendel's mother returns by night to the Danish hall of Heorot in order to avenge her son. She kills Æschere, a favourite of the Danish king and, in accordance with the ethic of the heroic code, has satisfied the blood-feud which had become her responsibility: Æschere's life is equal to, and payment for, her son's life. At this point (lines 1304-1306), the poet remarks: *Ne wæs þæt gewrixle til, / þæt hie on ba healfa bicgan scoldon / freonda feorum* ('Nor was that a good exchange, that they had to pay on both sides with the lives of friends').<sup>28</sup>

Fuller remarks that 'this allusion is simply to the motif of the vengeful mother,' a motif that is certainly critical to the narrative of 'Paid'.<sup>29</sup> However, bringing the full context of the source to bear on the title, 'Paid on Both Sides' provides a moral criticism of the feud-driven, heroic ethic that dominates the charade (as the *Beowulf*-poet's aside also seems to undermine the heroic value-system). Such a reading of the title feeds into the critique which 'Paid' develops of its world's axiology. Fuller is right to draw attention to Auden's thematic interest in Anglo-Saxon, but that interest is more profound than Fuller acknowledges.

Exactly the same phrase, *on ba healfe*, is used again by the *Beowulf*-poet in line 2063 (as noted by Fuller),<sup>30</sup> anticipating the outbreak of renewed hostilities between the Danes and the Heathobards, despite the union of Freawaru and Ingeld and the pact sworn by their families at the time of their marriage vows. However, the 'both sides' formula is yet

<sup>27</sup> John Fuller, *W. H. Auden: A Commentary* (London: Faber, 1998), p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Beowulf*, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 20.

more deeply embedded in *Beowulf*, for a slight variation on the phrase is used, during the retelling of the Finnsburh episode. In an attempt to end the slaughter between Finn's followers and Hnæf's, an oath of peace is sworn *on twa healfa* ('on the two sides').<sup>31</sup> That this oath is later broken and violence re-erupts (despite Finn's marriage bond with Hildeburgh), further illustrates that Auden's use of the phrase to title a work in which wedding vows provide only the briefest interlude of peace between two warring factions is much more than the 'simple' invocation of the vengeful mother motif.<sup>32</sup>

Obscure as the title is, the rest of the play is scarcely more limpid, but one might briefly summarise the work as a dramatisation of the inner conflict between the desire of the id and the repressive ego. This is the allegorical heart of 'Paid', and in order to flesh out its dramatic skeleton, Auden marshals as many cultural references to conflict as he can. The familial feuds of the Icelandic sagas, which Auden loved as a child, are evoked by the surface narrative, dealing with a continuing generational feud between the Nowers and the Shaws. This world is curiously blended with that of the English public-school, probably in response to a private joke between Isherwood and Auden.<sup>33</sup> Echoes of the trench warfare of the previous decade are strangely filtered through the war-games-as-competitive-sport mentality of the schoolboy cadet force, as when John Nower, planning to ambush the Shaws, tells George to 'pick up your men and get some sandwiches made up in the kitchen. I'll see about the ammunition if you will remember to bring a compass.'<sup>34</sup> Sandwiches aside, Fuller hears 'echoes here of the Cynewulf and Cyneheard

<sup>30</sup> *Beowulf*, p. 149.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92 (line 1095).

<sup>32</sup> Another variant occurs at line 800 of the poem, when we are told that Beowulf and Grendel intended to strike *on healfa gehwone* ('on each side' i.e. they both intended to strike each other). See *Beowulf*, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> See Christopher Isherwood, 'Some notes on the early poetry', first published in *New Verse*, 1937, and reprinted in *Auden: A Tribute*, pp. 74-9 (p. 75). Also Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, pp. 62 & 79.

<sup>34</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 4.

story in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 755'.<sup>35</sup> While this is a likely analogue, the event equally conjures up the many ambushes of Icelandic Sagas, in particular the ambush at Red Rock in *Njal's Saga*.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Auden brings German-Jewish racial antagonism into the play by giving several of the Nowers names such as Walter, Kurt and Zeppel, while among the Shaws are Aaron and Seth. Most of the places have generic northern names with Anglo-Danish etymologies (Kettledale, Hammergill, Garrigill) and this detail hints at the uneasy co-existence of two Germanic peoples in the north of England for so many generations. Furthermore, the feuds of the American Wild West are conjured up by the name 'Red Shaw', and underlying all is a gender conflict: a conflict that is only temporarily resolved in the figure of 'man-woman' in the dream sequence at the centre of the charade. Perhaps more specifically this is a mother-son conflict (something Auden felt himself to have endured), for in a device reminiscent of *Njal's Saga* (in which women goad men to bloody feuding),<sup>37</sup> it is Seth Shaw's mother who incites him to extend the feud by killing John Nower, just at the moment that his marriage to Anne Shaw had promised to end it. The final chorus remarks (somewhat unconvincingly) that in the perpetuation of tribal violence, the male is defeated and that 'his mother and her mother won'.<sup>38</sup> In such a kaleidoscope of conflicts, the deployment of motifs and mannerisms from Anglo-Saxon poetry is not window-dressing. As its title suggests, the internecine Germanic feuds depicted in *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnsburh* are analogous to the concerns of 'Paid on Both Sides'. Auden deliberately excavates an archaeological language of violence through which to speak his play.

<sup>35</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, *Njal's Saga*, trans. by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 145-50, 161-3, 202-4, 212-3 & 336-8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 214 & 239-40. The plot device is common to other early Germanic literature.

<sup>38</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 17.

First Shots: the Opening of 'Paid'

'Paid' opens with an exchange between Trudy and Walter, two of the Nowers:

- T.* You've only just heard?  
*W.* Yes. A breakdown at the Mill needed attention, kept me all morning. I guessed no harm. But lately, riding at leisure, Dick met me, panted disaster. I came here at once. How did they get him?  
*T.* In Kettledale above Colefangs road passes where high banks overhang dangerous from ambush. To Colefangs had to go, would speak with Layard, Jerry and Hunter with him only. They must have stolen news, for Red Shaw waited with ten, so Jerry said, till for last time unconscious. Hunter was killed at first shot. They fought, exhausted ammunition, a brave defence but fight no more.<sup>39</sup>

Immediately noticeable is the elliptical and paratactic style. A variety of different types of words have been pared out of Trudy's and Walter's dialogue. Only one definite article has survived, while five others we might have expected to find have been dispensed with.<sup>40</sup> Similarly pronouns and possessive adjectives are omitted where context clarifies the incomplete syntax,<sup>41</sup> and even the noun 'men' is only understood from its preceding adjective 'ten'. Auden is prepared to do without subjects, modal verbs and even main verbs where the complement will supply all this information.<sup>42</sup> This kind of terse syntax is similar to that in some of Pound's poetry and much of Hopkins's, but Auden takes the technique much further than Pound does and avoids the obscurity that Hopkins risks in his more radical moments.

Of course, the breathlessness of these staccato lines is partly due to the urgency and tragedy of the events that Trudy and Walter are sharing with the audience. Auden is manipulating the style of telegraphic communications which related such weighty news,

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> 'Panted [the] disaster', '[the] road passes', 'they must have stolen [the] news', 'till for [the] last time' and 'killed at [the] first shot').

<sup>41</sup> 'To Colefangs [he] had to go' and 'exhausted [their] ammunition'.

but it is not unreasonable to suggest that Auden is also mimicking the spare, understated narrative of Anglo-Saxon battle poetry. Certainly the admiration for men who died in 'brave defence but fight no more' is a sentiment entirely in keeping with poems like *The Battle of Maldon* and *Beowulf*. This collocation of style and sentiment strongly argues for a deliberate use of the conventions of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The inversion of 'To Colefangs had to go', and the use of the modal 'would' with the force almost of a full verb do not detract from this impression, although individually they could both be seen as general archaic effects, rather than specific Saxonisms.

In keeping with this Anglo-Saxon mode is the absence of conjunctions, particularly of co-ordination. Instead clauses are juxtaposed, marked off from each other by the simplest of punctuation, commas and periods.<sup>43</sup> One can construe relationships of co-ordination and subordination between these units, just as a translator of an Anglo-Saxon poem might choose to turn the paratactic movement of the original syntax into more idiomatic modern English; a syntax regulated by a system of markers, a more 'policed' sentence structure. Yet such a way of reading either Anglo-Saxon verse or these imitative lines of Auden's, imposes a set of grammatical assumptions which are alien to the way the words are put together. The syntax moves ahead incrementally: it is additive rather than hierarchical, proceeding in short, muscular bursts. That the movement of syntax is inextricably bound up with the movement of thought hardly needs stating: this is writing where, in Edward

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<sup>42</sup> The phrase 'I guessed no harm' has suppressed 'there would be' from its centre; the reader probably supplies something like 'he fell' before the word 'unconscious'; and if 'fight' is a verb, then the final sentence lacks 'they (will)'.

<sup>43</sup> Details of punctuation and lay-out have been checked against the version of 'Paid on Both Sides' which was printed in W. H. Auden, *Poems*, 2nd edition (London: Faber, 1933). The only difference in this passage is that *Poems* includes a half-line of blank leading between each speaker.



Dahlberg's words (cited by Charles Olson), 'one perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception'.<sup>44</sup>

I have called this exchange 'writing' rather than poetry, for it is not set on the page according to the conventions of verse (as other passages in the play are), but according to those of dramatic prose, in a justified block, slightly indented from the left-hand margin and the speaker's initial. In manuscript, Anglo-Saxon poetry is also preserved in 'prose form' (the whole page is used from the extreme left to extreme right margin). As scholars started to understand the prosodic measures of Anglo-Saxon poetry more clearly, it became conventional for modern editions to print the poetry in lines of two 'verses' separated by a caesura (after some early experiments with printing one verse to the line). Following a similar 'editorial' procedure we might re-lineate Walter's and Trudy's main speeches as follows:

	Yes. A <b>breakdown</b> at the <b>Mill</b>	<b>needed</b> attention,
	<b>kept</b> me all <b>morning</b> .	I <b>guessed</b> no <b>harm</b> .
	But <b>lately</b> , <b>riding</b> at <b>leisure</b> ,	<b>Dick</b> met me, <b>panted</b> disaster.
	I <b>came</b> here at <b>once</b> .	<b>How</b> did they <b>get</b> him?
5	In <b>Kettledale</b> above <b>Colefangs</b>	<b>road</b> <b>passes</b>
	where <b>high</b> <b>banks</b> <b>overhang</b>	<b>dangerous</b> to <b>ambush</b> .
	To <b>Colefangs</b> <b>had</b> to go,	would <b>speak</b> with <b>Layard</b> ,
	<b>Jerry</b> and <b>Hunter</b> with <b>him</b> only.	
	They <b>must</b> have <b>stolen</b> <b>news</b> ,	for <b>Red Shaw</b> <b>waited</b> with <b>ten</b> ,
10	so <b>Jerry</b> <b>said</b> ,	till for <b>last</b> time <b>unconscious</b> .
	<b>Hunter</b> was <b>killed</b> at <b>first</b> <b>shot</b> .	
	They <b>fought</b> , [ <i>pause</i> ]	<b>exhausted</b> ammunition,
	a <b>brave</b> <b>defence</b> ,	but <b>fight</b> no <b>more</b> .

Such a lineation makes visible a very audible verse structure within this 'prose' block of type, just as early editors of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts came to realise that the solid blocks of script they were looking at recorded poems. Some remarks need to be made

<sup>44</sup> Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse', *Poetry New York*, 3 (1950), reprinted in *Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*, ed. by James Scully (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 272-82 (p. 273).

about my lineation, for scansion is not an exact science, but the exercise of judgement, and there are certainly places in which my re-setting of Auden's lines is arguable. Firstly, I have recorded stress (with bold type) as my ear hears, often contradicting scholarly descriptions of Anglo-Saxon rhythms. These deem it unlikely, for example, that verbs will carry a main stress within a half-line (particularly if that half-line contains two nouns). However, for the lines above to sound natural, verbs do need to carry stress, and are often found in a half-line which does not have two (or sometimes any) nouns. Nor are secondary stresses marked (often heard in compounds), although these play an important part in the overall aural effect. I hear them on '-down', '-dale', '-fangs', 'banks' and 'Shaw'.<sup>45</sup>

Such editorial interference reveals a regular 'half-line' of two main stresses in the manner of Anglo-Saxon verses, with the exception of lines three, nine and twelve (my numbering). Lines three and nine I have scanned as 'hyper-metric' lines of six stresses. The first half of line thirteen can carry only one stress, an instance in Anglo-Saxon verse so rare that editors have sought to amend the perceived error of a text which records such a measure. However, there is no such problem here. Working towards the narrative climax of this passage, the gravity of what is being said demands a significant pause after 'fought'; in effect a rest or blank stress. This preserves the approximate isochronous balance of each stich as it is delivered. Even if one takes exception to my interpretation of such equivocal details, the general point remains, that a rhythmic movement remarkably similar to that of Anglo-Saxon verse is employed in this paragraph, and simultaneously, visually obscured by the type-setting. This movement basically consists of units of two stresses (arranged into groups of four in my re-setting). Auden, like many

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<sup>45</sup> Although 'overhang' could take stress on its first syllable, making 'hang' a secondary stress, this is more

other twentieth-century writers on prosody, seems to have considered this as the underlying pattern of all English verse, even heard beneath the patterns of accentual syllabics. Alan Ansen reports that on 7 May 1947 Auden told him:

You know, the basic English line has four stresses. The language seems to go by twos and fours - that's why you have to say "a *fucking day*." French works on an entirely different principle. I wonder whether they have anything like it in German. In the *Beowulf* line you keep hearing the base in blank verse - it seems so silly to talk about "iambic pentameter" - but most of the lines really only have four stresses. For instance "in *hideous ruin and combustion down*."<sup>46</sup>

The reader will notice that alliteration is not employed as an integral part of the 'Paid' measure, nor is it over-used ornamentally, as in Pound's earliest Saxonist work. Lines eight and thirteen are alliterative in 'permissible' Anglo-Saxon patterns (*ab bc*); lines five and six are 'illegal' patterns (*aa bc*).<sup>47</sup> However, the actual rhythms used in each half-line are generally more accurate in their imitation of Anglo-Saxon than Pound's impressions of the verse. Students of Auden's generation at Oxford were expected to know Sievers's system of 'five types',<sup>48</sup> and while Auden may not have applied himself to every aspect of his studies rigorously, no new technical knowledge about the making of verse is likely to have escaped his scrutiny. Every half-line that can be scanned here conforms to one of Sievers's five types, by far the most common being type A and type B. As Auden varies the number of unstressed syllables in the dips, it would be difficult to describe these movements in any meaningful way with the language of accentual-syllabics. Dealt the injustice of such a terminology the approximate isochronous equivalence of A and B-type half-lines would disintegrate into a mosaic of trochees and dactyls, or iambs and anapaests that disguise rather than reveal the underlying regularity of the rhythm.

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likely if the word is a noun: as a verb my reading is preferable.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Ansen, *The Table Talk of W. H. Auden*, ed. by Nicholas Jenkins (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1990), p. 61.

<sup>47</sup> The sound patterning is much more intricate than an account of the alliteration suggests; note the near rhyme of '-fangs' and '-hang' and 'Cole-' and 'stolen'.

Once this passage is considered as verse, it also becomes apparent that every punctuation mark signals the end of a rhythmic half-line (though not every half-line is marked by punctuation). So the punctuation, although not consistent, serves a metrical purpose, reflecting one of the uses of pointing in Anglo-Saxon poetic manuscripts (although fixed conventions do not seem to have existed and metrical points may have been used only to clarify ambiguity). Not only are the opening lines of the play imitative of Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry, but they are visually imitative of the way that poetry looks on the page. Just as the setting of the play blurs the boundaries between modern England and the lawlessness of medieval Iceland and Viking Northumbria, so the type-setting of these words blurs our understanding of the boundary between prose and poetry; we see the conventional signs of one, but hear the noises of another. In a variety of ways 'Paid' defamiliarizes the familiar.

#### Speaking of Trouble: the Saxonised Chorus of 'Paid'

This opening passage establishes a range of Saxonesque rhythms and syntax which typifies much of the rest of the play. Whenever the register shifts from the colloquial we find elements of this Saxonised style, in particular Auden deploys it in several of the play's choruses.<sup>49</sup> For example, the first chorus begins:

Can speak of trouble, pressure on men  
Born all the time, brought forward into light.<sup>50</sup>

Immediately audible is the organisation of the accentual rhythm into four beats per line, divided by a strong mid-line caesura (punctuated with a comma). More significantly, the first phrase is strikingly like the opening rhetorical gambit of *The Seafarer*: *mæg ic be me*

<sup>48</sup> See *Second Public Examinations*, Paper V(a), q. 3 & Paper V(b), q. 5.

<sup>49</sup> The first, unpublished version of 'Paid' also began with a heavily Saxonist passage, a chorus which draws directly on *The Wanderer*. This chorus is later edited and given to Walter, several scenes into the charade. See the first appendix to *The English Auden* (pp. 409-16).

*sylfum soðgied wrecan* ('I can tell a song of truth about myself').<sup>51</sup> This device may have been indicative of a formulaic opening for poetry of complaint: *The Wife's Lament* has a similar construction in its second line (*ic þæt secgan mæg*).<sup>52</sup> Auden's 'can speak of trouble' is, therefore, a variation on variations. By omitting the first person pronoun, Auden's modal verb is kept in first position (as in *The Seafarer*), but while the subject of the chorus's speech may indeed be 'true', the truth its speaker can profess is that of mutual mistrust and enmity.

Four of the six remaining choruses of 'Paid' are typified by a kind of weary, gnomic wisdom, won from hard experience, reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon elegies. In the first version, 'Paid' opened with an additional Saxonist chorus. Furthermore, the Saxonesque 'Doom is dark', published in the 1933 reprint of Auden's first collection, *Poems*, has been titled 'Chorus' and seems to have been intended for the lost play 'The Fronny'.<sup>53</sup> Auden once conceived of the choruses to his early dramatic writing as modern equivalents of the Anglo-Saxon elegiac voice, but did not hold to this for long, as the reattribution of the first chorus to Walter, the independent publication of 'Doom is dark', and the two un-Saxonist choruses confirm.

As Fuller has noted, that original first chorus (now assigned to Walter) makes use of expressions and themes from *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.<sup>54</sup> The first line is a close paraphrase of *oft him anhaga* ('often the solitary one', line 1 of *The Wanderer*),<sup>55</sup> while

<sup>50</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> *The Exeter Book*, ed. by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie and George Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 3 (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936), p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>53</sup> *The English Auden*, p. xiv, n..

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 134.

the second stanza appears to echo the sentiment of lines 48-52 from *The Seafarer*.<sup>56</sup>

Details such as 'death of friends' also alert us to resonance with *The Wanderer*, the *eardstapa* of which poem has suffered *winemæge hryre* (line 7, 'death of kinsmen') and is called *freondleas* and *wineleas* (lines 28 and 45, 'friendless').

Often the man, alone shut, shall consider  
The killings in old winters, death of friends.  
Sitting with stranger shall expect no good.

Spring came, urging to ships, a casting off,  
But one would stay, vengeance not done; it seemed  
Doubtful to them that they would meet again.

Fording in the cool of the day they rode  
To meet at crossroads when the year was over:  
Dead is Brody, such a man was Maul.

I will say this not falsely; I have seen  
The just and the unjust die in the day,  
All, willing or not, and some were willing.<sup>57</sup>

Like the *wræcca*, or exile of Anglo-Saxon elegy, this solitary man is isolated from his social milieu. Deprived of kith and kin, his only companion is a 'stranger', one of the accepted meanings of the word *wræcca*. Entirely consistent with this Saxonesque theme of exile is the tenor created by the use of the modal verb 'shall',<sup>58</sup> and the Germanic understatement of the litotical 'I will say this not falsely' (again a kind of variation on *mæg ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan*): we recall that the rhetorical effects, as much as the metrical effects, of Anglo-Saxon seized Auden's imagination. Furthermore, Auden inverts subjects and complements ('Dead is Brody, such a man was Maul'), a perfectly legitimate syntactical pattern in an inflected language like Anglo-Saxon, but a more deviant idiom in uninflected modern English. Later in life, Auden described his Edenic world in an essay called 'Reading', published in 1948. The language of Eden should be

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 5.



'of mixed origins like English, but highly inflected'.<sup>59</sup> About the same time (1947), Auden is reputed to have remarked: 'it's a shame I can't write lines backward as they could in inflected Icelandic'.<sup>60</sup> His early poetry attempts exactly that feat.

Nor is the stoic fatalism of the final statement without relevance to the rhetoric of 'barbarous' northern poetry. Deprived of the comfort and protection of his *comitatus* (the warrior-band loyal to a Germanic lord), the figure in this monologue offers a warning about where blood-feuds lead. The heroic code demands that one avenge the killing of one's *cynn*; it is for this reason that 'one would stay', resisting the seasonal stimulus to travel and emigration: indeed Dick Nower walks away from 'vengeance not done', while his brother John remains to be killed. In *The Battle of Maldon*, to die while avenging one's kin is unequivocally the right and honourable thing to do. The last line of the 'Often the man' passage may recall that in *Maldon*, some of the East Saxons are unwilling to die and that they flee the battlefield dishonourably. The just are killed gloriously, attempting to avenge their lord, without whose protection the lives of the unjust, fleeing the field, are worthless. However, in 'Paid', the situation is not so clear-cut. Speeches such as this invest the will to vengeance with a certain amount of dignity, in accord with the heroic ethos. Yet at the same time we are reminded of the brutal outcome of such a code pursued to its logical end: the destruction of social communities through killing or driving individuals away. The moral ambiguity of 'Paid' aligns it less with *Maldon*, and more with *Beowulf*, a poem which is also referred to in this passage. Hengist's enforced over-winter stay with Finn, is hinted at by the line: 'but one would

<sup>58</sup> Compare lines 37, 65, 70 and 73 of *The Wanderer*, where *sceal* has the force of 'must'. *The Exeter Book*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>59</sup> Auden, *Dyer's Hand*, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Ansen, *Table Talk*, p. 22.

stay, vengeance not done'.<sup>61</sup> In fact vengeance, or *gyrnwacu*, is exactly what Hengist's thoughts turn to once spring arrives and the summer thaw allows him to leave by ship (lines 1136ff.).<sup>62</sup> Auden's previous line, stating that 'spring came urging to ships, a casting off', is therefore much more likely to refer to this episode of *Beowulf*, than it does to *The Seafarer*, as Fuller asserts.<sup>63</sup> Such a reading certainly accounts for the logic of 'but' (Hengist should leave at the first signs of spring, but stays in order to obtain vengeance). Moreover, the final line of Walter's speech echoes Hrothgar's prediction, made when Beowulf is taking his leave, that they will not meet each other again (lines 1873-6).<sup>64</sup>

Structurally, this passage is built from a first stanza modelled on *The Wanderer*, a second mined from *Beowulf*, a third which is reminiscent of ambush scenes from the Icelandic sagas, and a fourth which expresses the aphoristic fatalism of Anglo-Saxon gnomic poems such as *The Fates of Men*. 'Paid' can be seen as an attempt to write a synthesis of two different modes of Northern literature; heroic poetry and sagas (including *Beowulf*), and the elegiac. While acknowledging the Anglo-Saxon allusions and sentiments in this 'Often the man' passage, it would be an incomplete account of the subject that did not deal with the extraordinary choice of typographical lay-out for these lines. Where else can one read Saxonesque verses arranged into tercets?<sup>65</sup> Most of the lines are conventionally Anglo-Saxon from a metrical point of view, and all can be scanned as

<sup>61</sup> Lines 1125ff., *Beowulf*, p. 95.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>63</sup> This allusion was pointed out to me by Michael Alexander.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup> In *Poems*, 2nd edn, Walter's first line 'The best are gone' is set with no leading between it and the first 'tercet', unlike the clear break Mendelson leaves between the preliminary line and the first tercet (like that between the fourth stanza and Walter's last remark 'Here they are.'). However, the page format of *Poems* is much smaller than that of *The English Auden* and it seems that the compositor's chief aim in *Poems* was to ensure that the visual integrity of each whole tercet is preserved: a gap after 'The best are gone' would

having four main stresses, although a few have an ambiguous caesura. Yet to shape such lines into a stanzaic pattern which is indelibly associated with poetry from Romance languages (and in particular with Dante) is unprecedented. No rhyme scheme necessitates this arrangement, rather each stanza marks a discrete and logically complete rhetorical period. The fusion of Anglo-Saxon metres and the patterns of Romance stanza-shapes provides yet more evidence of the young Auden's precocious technical skill and of his desire to defamiliarize expectations of poetic form.

#### Greatest Gun Anger: the Narrative of Ambush

Further typographical experiments with Saxonesque rhythm are made in the section immediately following Walter's elegiac three-step. The stage directions inform us that Nower, George and Sturton enter: '*The Three speak alternately*'. Three eight-line, and one seven-line, stanzas follow:

Day was gone Night covered sky  
 Black over earth When we came there  
 To Brandon Walls Where Red Shaw lay  
 Hateful and sleeping Unfriendly visit.  
 I wished to revenge Quit fully  
 Who my father At Colefangs valley  
 Lying in ambush Cruelly shot  
 With life for life.

Then watchers saw They were attacked  
 Shouted in fear A night alarm  
 To men asleep Doomed men awoke  
 Felt for their guns Ran to the doors  
 Would wake their master Who lay with woman  
 Upstairs together Tired after love.  
 He saw then There would be shooting  
 Hard fight.

Shot answered shot Bullets screamed  
 Guns shook Hot in the hand  
 Fighter lay Groaning on ground

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mean the page break would split the first stanza between its second and third lines. Therefore the lack of leading between 'The best are gone' and 'Often the man' does not contradict the present argument.

Gave up life Edward fell  
 Shot through the chest First of our lot  
 By no means refused fight Stephen was good  
 His first encounter Showed no fear  
 Wounded many.

Then Shaw knew We were too strong  
 Would get away Over the moor  
 Return alive But found at the ford  
 Sturton waiting Greatest gun anger  
 There he died Nor any came  
 Fighters home Nor wives shall go  
 Smiling to bed They boast no more.<sup>66</sup>

Much of what was said regarding the terse opening of the play is also applicable to these lines. John Fuller remarks on 'the general reliance of the speech on the narrative formula of Old English heroic poems' and usefully compares 'Edward fell' with lines 117-8 of *The Battle of Maldon*; *Eadweard anne sloge / swiðe mid his swurde* ('Edward struck another violently with his sword').<sup>67</sup> However, many other parallels and similarities suggest themselves here. 'I wished to revenge Quit fully / Who my father At Colefangs valley / Lying in ambush Cruelly shot' echoes the sentiment to avenge one's lord, expressed at several points in *The Battle of Maldon*. Heroic poetry is also evoked by use of the epithet 'doomed' for the Shaw men-folk (*fæge* is used four times in *Maldon* and twice in *The Battle of Brunanburh*),<sup>68</sup> and the night alarm which wakes these doomed men to their death recalls Grendel's first attack on Heorot. *The Fight at Finnsburh* also contains the detail that warriors run to the doors when they realise they are under attack (lines 14-16)<sup>69</sup> and an allusion to the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard may be likely, for Cynewulf is taken unawares by Cyneheard, while visiting his mistress' chamber.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 24 and *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. 10. In fact, *Eadweard's* death, at lines 273-9 of the poem (*he on wæle læge*; 'he fell on the slaughter-heap'), provides a closer parallel with Auden's poem than the lines Fuller quotes. *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> 'The Battle of Brunanburh', in *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>69</sup> *Beowulf*, p. 213.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 13th edn (Oxford, 1954), pp. 1-3.

Moreover, Stephen 'showed no fear', as the Saxons in *Maldon* are *unearge* ('unafraid') in line 206,<sup>71</sup> and he 'wounded many', just as it is said of Æscferth, at line 271 of the same poem that, *æfre embe stunde he sealde sume wunde* ('from time to time, he inflicted some wound').<sup>72</sup> Shaw's attempt to escape 'over the moor' (the landscape of evil and danger in Anglo-Saxon culture) can be likened to the cowardly flight of Odda's kin and Godric in *Maldon*. In 'Paid', however, the coward is the enemy of the narrators and he pays for his cowardice with his life. Finally, the remark that the Shaws 'boast no more' calls to mind *Brunanburh*, in which we are told repeatedly that the defeated warriors had 'no need to boast' of their exploits in battle: *...hremen ne þorfte...* (line 39), *Gelpan ne þorfte...* (line 44), and *hlehhan ne þorftun...* (line 47).<sup>73</sup>

Besides these references to *Maldon* and *Brunanburh*, there are many other devices which draw more generally on the genre of heroic poetry. The special attention given to the first casualty is a typical device; the understated praise of Edward's bravery ('By no means refused fight') is entirely conventional.<sup>74</sup> The use of 'would' as a full verb ('wanted') has already been commented on in the first passage of the play. 'Nor' is repetitively used as an opening rhetorical device, as it is in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and, finally, 'gun anger' is surely modelled on *ecghete* ('sword-hate'), from line 84 of *Beowulf*.<sup>75</sup> Blending the style of Anglo-Saxon poetry and the weaponry of modern warfare may seem incongruous, but these lines dispel any doubts about the efficacy of ancient forms in dealing with twentieth-century struggle. One is reminded of Robert Graves's sense of the personal

<sup>71</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, lines 74-8 of *The Battle of Maldon*. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> *Beowulf*, p. 33.

relevance, to men who had spent nights in the trenches in fear of death, of passages such as that where Beowulf lies waiting for Grendel during the night.<sup>76</sup>

Again, the lay-out of these lines is of particular interest. Auden sets out two verses to a line in the manner in which modern editors have chosen to lineate Anglo-Saxon poetry. The caesura is not marked with a gap, but a second capital letter indicates the start of the second stich. This appeal to Anglo-Saxon rhythmical patterning through lineation and letter case makes these lines much easier to scan than those of the opening dialogue, and we have visual confirmation of how sparing Auden is with slack syllables. Often the two lifts of a half-line are separated merely by one dip ('Fighters lay' and 'Wounded many') and occasionally the half-line forms a pure spondee ('Hard fight' and 'Guns shook').<sup>77</sup> Unlike the opening passage, punctuation is almost absent here: the use of upper case making it unnecessary to mark the stichic periods with pointing.

Each stanza is used to mark out a major episode of the narrative, so that the matter, rather than sound-patterning, determines the strophic pattern. In this sense stanza organisation is used for similar reasons as it is in Walter's 'Often the man' speech. The eighth half-line, with which each of the first three stanzas ends, may look like a visual appeal to the bob or refrain of Middle English tail-end rhyme, but it is more likely that Auden is mimicking the way in which Anglo-Saxon poetry frequently initiates a major change of syntactic direction with the *b*-verse of a line, rather than with the *a*-verse (something he more clearly imitates in 'The Age of Anxiety'). Auden does not start each stanza with an

<sup>76</sup> Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), p. 362.

<sup>77</sup> C.f. Auden as reported by Ansen: 'English produces spondees without effort. For an uninflected language it's a real achievement.' Ansen, *Table-Talk*, p. 62. Compare this with C. S. Lewis, who remarks that the clashing stresses of Anglo-Saxon C-type verses allow metrical recognition of 'a rhythm of daily occurrence in our speech'. 'The Alliterative Metre', in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. by Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 15-26 (p. 19).



indentation to the position of a *b*-verse; the parallel is approximate rather than accurate. This may explain why the fourth stanza does not end with such an eighth line bob: the end of the whole section does not demand a 'mid-line' break to indicate new subject matter within this specific narrative, but rather an end to the whole convention which has been established for this passage.

Why use lineation, letter case and stanza breaks to indicate the aural and subject-matter organisation of a passage of verse when the ideal audience for that verse is supposedly not a reader, but a spectator? One conclusion is that the over-investment in lay-out of verse on the page is an indication that Auden's main field of interest is not really drama at all, but poetry. More sympathetically, one might argue that these visual signals are encoded stage directions to the cast on how to read the verse. The instructions for this passage are that Nower, George and Sturton are to 'speak alternately'. How much material they are each to speak alternately is not clear, although alternating stanzas is presumably ruled out by the fact that there are four (and only three speakers). A change of speaker after each line is possible, although this means that one speaker will occasionally utter two half-lines not syntactically connected ('To men asleep' is the complement of the previous line and not related to its *b*-verse 'Doomed men awoke'); a possible source of confusion. Nor would the line-by-line alternation of three speakers impose the regular shape of each paragraph-stanza onto the performance. Alternation by half-line removes the problem of one actor delivering syntactically unrelated lines. Instead each half-line is delivered in isolation, and patterns of apposition, addition, variation and juxtaposition are discerned by the listener incrementally, as is appropriate to the original performative context of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Furthermore, proceeding by half-lines provides a satisfying symmetry; each speaker delivers five half-lines in every

stanza, before a new paragraph-stanza is begun, by the same first speaker each time. It is likely that Auden intends visual codes to notate the oral performance of his poetry: the upper case lettering of each half-line indicates a change of speaker to the cast, as well as a change of stich to the reader.

#### Ending as it Ought: the Remaining Anglo-Saxon Allusions in 'Paid'

The next chorus ('The Spring unsettles sleeping partnerships'), presents some generalising wisdom about the seasons, reminiscent of the gnomic tradition of Anglo-Saxon. A list-like passage, based on the rhetorical opposition of 'there' and 'here', recalls Anglo-Saxon variation ('War is declared there, here a treaty signed; / Here a scrum breaks up like a bomb, there troops / Deploy like birds.'). Furthermore, the chorus laments the fate of a man isolated from his friends, who, like the *comitatus*-bereft speaker of *The Wanderer*, dreams of the pleasures of the mead-hall ('folk in dancing bunches, / Of tart wine spilt on home-made benches'). This same figure of exile 'comes thence to a wall. / Outside on frozen soil lie armies killed / Who seem familiar but they are cold.' These lines undoubtedly refer again to *The Wanderer* (see lines 78-80),<sup>78</sup> and perhaps also to *The Ruin*.<sup>79</sup>

These references are not just clever undergraduate allusions. As often as Auden invokes the world of the ancient, heroic North, he undermines the values commonly associated with it. When called as a witness a little later in the dream-like sequence at the centre of 'Paid', the character 'Bo' refers to 'days during the migrations',<sup>80</sup> which is perhaps meant

<sup>78</sup> *Worlad þa winsalo, waldend licgað / dreame bidrorene, dugup eal gecrong, / wlonc bi wealle* ('Then wine-halls crumble, rulers lie, deprived of pleasure, the warrior-band all fallen, proud by the wall'). *The Exeter Book*, p. 67.

<sup>79</sup> Auden's lines reflect the sentiments of the whole text of *The Ruin*. See *The Exeter Book*, pp. 227-9, or *The Earliest English Poems*, trans. by Michael Alexander (London: Penguin, 1966), pp. 30-1.

<sup>80</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 8.

to suggest the ancient migrations of the Germanic tribes, from which period dates so much of the heroic material common to the Anglo-Saxon *scops*, Norse *skalds* and their continental cousins. Bo testifies that 'By loss of memory we are reborn, / For memory is death'. The proximity of this remark to the mention of 'migrations' also calls to mind that Germanic poets were the historians of their peoples and kept the memory of the tribe's deeds in currency, from generation to generation. Bo may be offering a critique of the function of the poet in heroic society: it would be better for all concerned if these tribal lays of feuding and vengeance could be forgotten, for the commemorative poem is an incitement to future violence.

The proffered solution to this constant warring between factions is the same as that exemplified in the heroic code by poems like *Beowulf*, and has already been touched upon. In her role as 'peace-weaver',<sup>81</sup> a woman from one faction is given in marriage to a man of the other. Just as Hildeburh is given to Finn,<sup>82</sup> and as Freawaru is joined with Ingeld,<sup>83</sup> so John Nower and Anne Shaw are to be married. The effectiveness of this solution is, in both works, nil. Aaron ironically announces 'Now this shall end with marriage as it ought'.<sup>84</sup> Yet within a few short scenes Anne's kinsman Seth murders her fiancé, and so perpetuates the feud.

Building up to this climactic murder, the chorus asks:<sup>85</sup>

For where are Basley who won the Ten,  
Dickon so tarted by the House,  
Thomas who kept a sparrow-hawk?<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *Freoðuwebbe* (line 1942), *Beowulf*, p. 141.

<sup>82</sup> See the Finnsburh episode in *Beowulf*, lines 1068-1159, pp 90-8.

<sup>83</sup> See *Beowulf*, lines 2016-69, pp. 145-9.

<sup>84</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup> Two previous choruses ('To throw away the key and walk away', p. 12 and 'The Spring will come', p. 15), are devoid of noticeable Saxonisms.

<sup>86</sup> *The English Auden*, p.15.

Fuller notes that this is a further evocation of *The Wanderer*, echoing its *hwær cwom* passage (lines 92-5).<sup>87</sup> This is undoubtedly true, although it is worth noting that the Anglo-Saxon formula is used to express losses suffered by an English public school, just as public school high-jinks and Icelandic sagas are blended elsewhere. One might speculate that the plaques which commemorate old boys killed in the Great War, often found in the hall or chapel of an English school or Oxford College,<sup>88</sup> might well lie behind this passage. Nor is it fanciful to note that Thomas's sparrow-hawk is likely a recapitulation of the *hafoc* ('hawk') which Offa's kinsman releases before battle in line 8 of *The Battle of Maldon*.<sup>89</sup> Expressed in the closing chorus is the same stoicism evident in the final sections of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*. Sentiments such as, 'Though he believe it, no man is strong',<sup>90</sup> and the thwarting of man's expectations of material happiness, recall how the speaker of *The Wanderer* insists that all earthly comforts are *læne* ('transitory') and that the wise man understands how helpless one is in the face of *wyrd*, or 'fate' (lines 107-10).<sup>91</sup>

#### The Successes and Limitations of Anglo-Saxon in 'Paid'

Motifs and formulae from Anglo-Saxon battle poetry are used in 'Paid' to develop the themes of confrontation and feud. *Maldon*, *Beowulf* and *Brunanburh* are (together with Norse sagas) the bed-rock of literary conflict upon which 'Paid' is constructed. Some purposeful use is also made of the elegiac tradition in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Auden does not use poems like *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* to lament the passing of companions

<sup>87</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 136 and Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 34.

<sup>88</sup> Auden's college, Christ Church, is nicknamed 'the House' after its Latin name *Ædes Christi*. Auden might also be referring to the 'house' system of fostering a sense of community in traditional British schools.

<sup>89</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 17.

<sup>91</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 137.

(as Pound does in *The Cantos*), rather he fastens onto the self-reflexive angst of the speakers of those poems, and with it escalates the internal psychological conflict that the play seeks to dramatise at an allegorical level. Although I have termed the anxiety of the speakers of Anglo-Saxon elegies as 'angst', it is a stoic angst, if such a phrase be possible. Auden preserves this yoking of despair and endurance, so that these two attitudes, locked in embrace, dominate the mood of most of the characters in the play. Physical escape is the only way to break free, as exemplified by Dick's departure. Auden works this elegiac mode into the play mainly through the words of the chorus. This prevents his psychological (mis)reading of the Anglo-Saxon elegies from becoming too self-reflexive: it never becomes the unburdening of the troubled soul of one of the play's named characters, but part of a pattern in the overall fabric of the work. 'Pattern' might be too generous a word to use, for the use of the elegiac mood (unlike the battle poetry) is not consistent. Some choruses are characterised by a full deployment of borrowings from poems like *The Wanderer*, others are devoid of such elements, while Walter's own 'Often the man' speech shares their traits. While the narrative of combat in 'Paid' is always reported (as the *scop* retells the deeds of warriors) in writing that alludes to Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry and Old Norse sagas, the psychological dimension contributed by the elegies is only patchily employed.

To be fair to Auden, 'Paid' is clearly a juvenile and experimental work, and his experiments bear later fruit. Auden is working out what to do with the themes of Anglo-Saxon as much as he is working out how to incorporate its metrical possibilities into the medium of printed verse, dominated for so long by conventions of accentual-syllabics and Romance-derived stanzaic patterns. One of the most interesting features of the Anglo-

Saxon debt in 'Paid on Both Sides' is its employment of at least three distinct and unique typographical strategies for displaying Saxonist rhythms.

Reading the Saxonist passages of 'Paid' is a strange experience, akin to gazing into a Victorian museum cabinet; one finds curios from one epoch displayed side-by-side with similar objects from a totally alien period.<sup>92</sup> The fossils of psychological drama from tenth-century elegies jostle for a place next to the theories of post-Freudians such as Homer Lane and John Layard. Nor did 'Paid on Both Sides' always occupy a display cabinet entirely by itself, but was published as part of the collection *Poems* (1930). This decision may have been taken in order to pad out a slim volume. However many of these poems were worked on during the same period that 'Paid' was occupying Auden, some of them were intended as choruses for his lost play 'The Fronny', and certain themes, moods, linguistic textures and oblique allusions are common to both the individual poems and 'Paid on Both Sides'. Identification of a number of Anglo-Saxon references and imitations from this collection now follows. The reader is warned that several of these poems are hardly representative of Auden's best work, and much of the material is presented at the level of a commentary (although interpretation of two of the better poems is offered). This is necessary, both for the sake of academic thoroughness, and to demonstrate how pervasive Anglo-Saxon influence was, in the formative stages of Auden's poetic career. For Auden, this total immersion in Anglo-Saxon themes, styles and allusions pays off in his later work, when earlier awkwardness is lost, and the assimilation of a Saxonist style is complete.

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<sup>92</sup> In particular, I have in mind the Pitt-Rivers collection in Oxford. Auden, a biology student for a year, must have visited the Pitt-Rivers, for it is housed in the University Museum, also home to the university's natural science collection.



Poems: Bones Wrenched

Confronting the reader at the beginning of 'Poems 1927-1931' in Mendelson's *The English Auden* is the stark dislocation of 'Bones wrenched, weak whimper'.<sup>93</sup> This is a section from a longer, early poem, 'The sprinkler on the lawn', first published in 1928 in the private edition which Spender had partly hand-printed.<sup>94</sup> The dismembered 'Bones wrenched' survived briefly into the 1930 *Poems* (as poem XIII) before being dropped from the 1933 reprint.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore a curious (and perhaps unfortunate) accident of editorial procedure that the poem should now guard the gate to Auden's earliest individual poems: it never had such a prominence in any of the volumes Auden sanctioned. Nevertheless, it now confronts the reader about to journey into his earliest lyrics:

Bones wrenched, weak whimper, lids wrinkled, first dazzle known,  
 World-wonder hardened as bigness, years, brought knowledge, you:  
 Presence a rich mould augured for roots urged – but gone,  
 The soul is tetanous; gun-barrel burnishing  
 In summer grass, mind lies to tarnish, untouched, undoing,  
 Though body stir to sweat, or, squat as idol, brood,  
 Infuriate the fire with bellows, blank till sleep  
 And two-faced dream – 'I want', voiced treble as once  
 Crudely through flowers till dunghill cockcrow, crack at East.  
 Eyes, unwashed jewels, the glass floor slipping, feel, know Day,  
 Life stripped to girders, monochrome. Deceit of instinct,  
 Features, figure, form irrelevant, dismissed  
 Ought passes through points fair plotted and you conform,  
 Seen yes or no, too just for weeping argument.

The first two words recall some of the most memorable lines in *Beowulf*, the fight between Beowulf and Grendel where, in line 818, *burston banlocan* ('bone-locks burst apart').<sup>96</sup> The consecutively stressed, two-beat phrase 'bones wrenched' is separated by a comma from 'weak whimper', isochronously equivalent, despite containing a final

<sup>93</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii and pp. 437-9. Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 431-2. Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Beowulf*, p. 75.

unstressed syllable, and deploying alliteration on both the stressed syllables.

Syntactically, the relationship between the two phrases is not yet clear: perhaps they are in apposition and both apply to some head-noun yet to come. Another noun-phrase of two-stresses is added to the list, but the line refuses to resolve the reader's uncertainty: 'lids wrinkled' is rhythmically identical to 'weak whimper', but its second stressed syllable alliteratively echoes that of 'Bones wrenched'. Not only does the reader have to defer the possibility of a specific grammatical relationship between the constituents of this list, but he or she has yet to encounter a verb. The line ends with 'first dazzle known'; a phrase which breaks the repetition of a double consecutive-stress and varies the noun phrases with a participial phrase (a *scopish* device of variation).

'World-wonder' looks like a borrowing from Anglo-Saxon. In fact no such compound exists, but it echoes words like *woruldōrymm* in sense, and *woruldwuldor* in sound also (both mean something like 'worldly glory', or 'the glory of the world'): Anglo-Saxon compounds with *woruld-* number in their scores. The wide-eyed pleasure in life which the word suggests is tempered by 'hardened as bigness'. Another comma separates this phrase (the longest yet) from a further noun, 'years'. Finally, the reader encounters a verb, lurking near the end of the syntactic period, as it often does in Anglo-Saxon; 'brought knowledge.' Perhaps all the preceding nouns govern this one verb and its object (a common feature of the variational passages of Anglo-Saxon). Certainly the personal suffering implied in the first line traditionally brings universal wisdom in the elegiac poems of Anglo-Saxon. An innocent child's marvel in the presence of 'world-wonder' may eventually bring knowledge after years of becoming 'hardened as bigness'. However, another comma indicates grammatical resolution is not yet final; 'you:' completes the second line. 'Brought' now appears to be an adjectival participle

describing 'knowledge'; simply another noun phrase in this long list, ending 'you'. Except the list does not actually end here: the colon anticipates yet another phrase in which a finite verbal clause is hard to distinguish. The line 'Presence a rich mould augured for roots urged – but gone,' is perhaps best understood by inserting a suppressed 'which' after 'presence', but the relationship of such a clause to the list of noun-phrases preceding the colon (except for 'you') is hard to determine. As the poem continues, the more obvious, surface similarities to Anglo-Saxon (phrases constructed of two stressed syllables, alliterative links, phrases or compounds borrowed from Anglo-Saxon) disappear. What remains is the list-like incantation of predominantly noun-phrases. The syntactic relationship between the various blocks, marked off by commas, semicolons, colons and (occasionally) periods, remains inscrutable. The poem constantly defers syntactic resolution, resisting closure and allowing itself to be added to. There is an unfortunate irony to 'brought knowledge', for the reader has trouble understanding even the literal level of the poem, let alone the private symbols and allusions with which Auden seems to have packed it.<sup>97</sup>

### Riddling

It is this resistance to closure of interpretation which I see as the main bequest of Anglo-Saxon to Auden's earliest poetry. Anglo-Saxon poetry uses syntactic deferral as one of its main techniques. In an orally-derived poetic it is advantageous to use structures which are open and elastic, to which more material can be added incrementally without the expenditure of many rhetorical discourse markers, which may disrupt the metre. With regard to Hopkins's poetry, the point was made that a modern English poem in which the reader is working hard to construe the syntax (looking towards the end of periods for

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<sup>97</sup> See Fuller, *Commentary*, pp. 3-6.

verbs and so on) reflects the kind of interpretative difficulties a modern reader of Anglo-Saxon experiences. Auden's exam results may suggest that he experienced such difficulties himself: who will earn more than a third class grade in construing 'Bones wrenched'?

Many of the poems in the 1930 collection are enigmatic and riddling. Even when a poem is easy to construe syntactically, it may not offer a simple key to its interpretation, despite having a knowing tone of communicable sagacity. A poem like the ninth in Mendelson's edition ('Taller to-day, we remember similar evenings', Poem XXVI in both the 1930 and 1933 *Poems*),<sup>98</sup> makes a number of rhetorical gestures which imply the knowledge of something worth understanding. These include the generalising and universalising function of 'we', the use of the present tense throughout most of the poem, the appeal to shared experience of 'It is seen how...' and the almost vatic tone of 'Noises at dawn will bring / Freedom for some'. Yet despite these gestures it is not at all obvious what the truth which the poem attempts to profess actually is. The Anglo-Saxon elegies also make a number of gnomic bids to universal wisdom, and indeed, the early, six-stanza versions of 'Taller to-day' contained a pastiche of lines 80-4 of *The Wanderer*,<sup>99</sup> the same lines which Auden had recycled in 'Paid': 'One staring too long, went blind in a tower, / One sold all his manors to fight, broke through and faltered'.<sup>100</sup> It is not true to say that the nature of the wisdom is unclear in poems like *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, but it is not always apparent how comforting we are meant to find some of their maxim-like passages. Another favourite genre of Anglo-Saxon poetry was the riddle, a poem which

<sup>98</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 26 and 432.

<sup>99</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 136. Fuller also compares 'this peace / No Bird can contradict' to the sparrow in Bede's account of the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria. *Commentary*, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 26. This material had been removed by the time the poem was included in *Collected Poems*, perhaps because it appears to satirise W. B. Yeats.

remains unanswered unless by the explicit engagement of the reader. Auden shared this passion for the riddle: in conversation with Alan Ansen in February 1947, he is reported to have said (while discussing 'an exciting Old Welsh epic'):

You know primitive poetry is always obscure. [...] People are still interested in crossword puzzles and riddles. I don't like crossword puzzles because poetry has more relevance. If you would present highbrow poetry as a superior type of riddle with a definite answer, it might catch on with a good many people.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1956, Auden claimed that one of his personal indicators as to whether or not a critic was a good one, was their enjoyment of 'riddles and all other ways of not calling a spade a spade'.<sup>102</sup> This aspect of Anglo-Saxon poetry, the open-ended, riddling verse which asks as much as it answers, is an appropriate template with which to approach Auden's earliest poems, although it is true that he wilfully obscures these poems further by crossing the riddle genre with personal and private material.

### Inevitable Procedures

When, at the end of 'Suppose they met, the inevitable procedure',<sup>103</sup> Auden wishes to allude to the Fall of Man and its consequences for human relationships (the poem is about unfulfilled desire), he writes: 'Down they fell; sorrow they had after that'. Fuller claims that this wording, clearly not from the authorised King James version of Bible, is a translation from the Anglo-Saxon poem *Genesis*.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately no line reference is supplied, although perhaps line 961 is what Fuller has in mind: *Gesæton þa æfter synne sorgfulre land* ('Then after sin, they occupied a sorrowful land').<sup>105</sup> While not a close parallel, the verb in first position, the preposition, and 'sorrow' could have influenced

<sup>101</sup> Ansen, *Table-Talk*, p. 24.

<sup>102</sup> Auden, *Dyer's Hand*, p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 22. Poem XXV in the 1930 *Poems*. *The English Auden*, p. 432.

<sup>104</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 7.

Auden's line. Certainly 'sorrow' (*sorge*) features prominently in the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis*. In any case, there is nothing that corresponds more exactly in *Genesis*. The line comes about a hundred lines after *Genesis A* resumes (a second poem, *Genesis B* is interpolated into the text). It describes Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden and so invokes the failure of desire, even when satisfied, to provide true fulfilment. It is fruitless in a poem such as this to seek much significance in the choice of a Saxonised reference to The Fall over a more canonical form of wording. Something in the tone of the line appeals to Auden, the sonority and gravitas of the two inverted clauses lends the weight of finality to this closing line: the Saxonesque understatement of 'sorrow they had after that' creates a powerful hush at the poem's end. Yet the Anglo-Saxon *Genesis* is not used as part of any coherent design and this poem is dropped from the 1933 reprint.

#### Nor was that Final

The almost arbitrary nature of Auden's allusions in this volume is illustrated by poem XXIII of the 1930 collection:

Nor was that final, for about that time  
Gannets blown over northward, going home,  
Surprised the secrecy beneath the skin.

'Wonderful was that cross and I full of sin.  
Approaching, utterly generous, came on  
For years expected, born only for me.'

Returned from that dishonest country, we  
Awake, yet tasting the delicious lie:  
And boys and girls, equal to be, are different still.

No, these bones shall live, while daffodil  
And saxophone have something to recall  
Of Adam's brow and of the wounded heel.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. by George Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 1 (London & New York: Routledge & Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 31.

<sup>106</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 24.



According to notes Auden made in the unpublished Ansen notebook,<sup>107</sup> the first stanza of the poem apparently refers (very obliquely) to lines 45-7 of *The Wanderer*: *Donne onwæcneð eft wineleas guma / gesihð him biforan fealwe wegas / bapian brimfuglas brædan feþra* ('Then the friendless man awakens again, sees before him the dark waves the bathing seabirds, spreading their feathers.').<sup>108</sup> Northern gannets might just represent Anglo-Saxon *brimfuglas*, but little else in the stanza seems to bear any relationship to these lines from *The Wanderer*. One wonders whether Auden has mis-remembered his own allusion: *The Seafarer* explicitly mentions *ganetes hleoþor* ('the cry of the gannet') in the context of a squall (line 20).<sup>109</sup> If Auden was working as obliquely as this, it is tempting to speculate that the 'sudden bird', heard by the speaker of 'From the very first coming down' (the fifth poem in both the 1930 and 1933 collections) 'cry out against the storm' is also a reference to *The Seafarer*.<sup>110</sup> *The Seafarer*'s speaker claims that against the sound of the stormy sea he hears the sounds of swans, gannets and curlews; his only companions. Auden's 'year's arc a completed round', and his speaker being 'decent with the seasons' shares the same sentiment as lines 48-52 of *The Seafarer* (as does Walter's 'spring came' passage in 'Paid on Both Sides'). In the poem which originally followed 'Nor was that final', 'From scars where kestrels hover', birds are again conjured suddenly from a storm, calling their signature tunes on the air.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps the seabirds of Anglo-Saxon elegy dwelt in Auden's imagination rather as they did in Pound's, but it seems unreasonable to expect allusions as glancing as these to be seized upon by readers, and

<sup>107</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 135.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>110</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 25.

<sup>111</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 28. Auden is relying on the Norse root that gives us 'scars' meaning 'cliffs' or 'craggs' (c.f. 'The Scores', address of the School of English, University of St. Andrews), rather than the more common 'scar' which derives from Old French. The poem also includes 'doomed companions'; a Saxonism if ever there was one, and it is tempting to read a pun on the Norse word for a poet into the phrase 'driven sleet / Had scalded to the bone'.

perfectly justifiable to ask what difference it makes to an interpretation of these poems if they are. In both *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, the birds instil sorrow in the speakers: a symbolic significance that would work in the context of 'From scars where kestrels hover', but hardly in the case of 'Nor was that final' or 'From the very first coming down'.

Far more obvious is that the second stanza of 'Nor was that final' is fabricated from translation and paraphrase of words uttered by the speakers of *The Dream of the Rood*. Line 13 of that poem is almost identical to the first line of this stanza: *Syllic wæs se sigebeam, and ic synnum fah* ('wondrous was the cross, and I stained with sin').<sup>112</sup> The next line of Auden's poem presumably alludes to lines 33-4 of *The Dream of the Rood*, in which the cross remarks that he saw the Lord of mankind hastening towards him with great zeal. The remaining details of the stanza are relevant to Christ more generally, rather than being specific to the narrative of *The Dream of The Rood*. In placing the whole of the second stanza in quotation marks, Auden has blurred the distinct narrative voices of *The Dream of the Rood*. Line by line we read words belonging to the dreamer, then the cross, and then the dreamer again. Auden attempts to telescope the action of a one-hundred and fifty-five line poem into three lines, creating one unified persona where there are two. He then embeds this monologue within a longer poem.

Following this reported speech, there is an awakening, as the dreamer in *The Dream of the Rood* continues his tale after the rood's monologue by explicating its impact on his own life. In Auden's poem, the world of divine promises (looked forward to by the rood and the dreamer in the Anglo-Saxon poem) is a 'dishonest country' from which the

universal speaker/dreamer ('we') returns, unconvinced by the dream vision. Something is realised to be a 'delicious lie': is it the idea of original sin, or of redemption through Christ? Or both? It is difficult to decide whether this poem expresses a kind of pragmatic epicureanism, rejecting the notion that creatures of the flesh ought to feel unworthy in the divine presence, or whether it is the possibility of salvation from original sin that is being rejected. 'Adam's brow' and 'the wounded heel' will persist in all things, but this hardly settles the matter as the wounded heel is also a promise of salvation. Perhaps the poem is intended to be ambiguous, a complication of the uncompromisingly evangelist theology of *The Dream of the Rood* with which the young Auden felt uncomfortable.

Alongside these Anglo-Saxon references, Fuller also identifies allusions to *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.XV.65 in line 9, to Ezekiel xxxvii.3 in line 10 and to Eliot's 'Whispers of Immortality' in line 3 (and a more general pastiche of Eliot in the final stanza's 'daffodil / And saxophone').<sup>113</sup> It seems that almost the entire poem is a patchwork of borrowings and re-workings. The method itself is a pastiche of Eliot's cut-and-paste montage in 'The Waste Land', but whereas an argument can always be made for the pertinence of the texts which Eliot guts in the abattoir of his poem, it is hard to fathom how *The Wanderer*, *The Dream of the Rood*, The Book of Ezekiel and 'Whispers of Immortality' are all germane to the development of 'Nor was that final' (other than that the poem is advancing some sort of religious argument). Once again, this poem does not survive to the 1933 reprint.

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<sup>112</sup> *The Vercelli Book*, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, 2, ed. by George Krapp (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 61.

<sup>113</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 11.

### What was Never Joined

This is not true of 'Control of the passes was, he saw, the key', which is more rewarding for the reader and becomes a canonical early Auden poem, later titled 'The Secret Agent':

Control of the passes was, he saw, the key  
To this new district, but who would get it?  
He, the trained spy, had walked into the trap  
For a bogus guide, seduced with the old tricks.

At Greenhearth was a fine site for a dam  
And easy power, had they pushed the rail  
Some stations nearer. They ignored his wires.  
The bridges were unbuilt and trouble coming.

The street music seemed gracious now to one  
For weeks up in the desert. Woken by water  
Running away in the dark, he often had  
Reproached the night for a companion  
Dreamed of already. They would shoot, of course,  
Parting easily who were never joined.<sup>114</sup>

As Fuller notes,<sup>115</sup> the last line ('Parting easily who were never joined.') refers to *Wulf and Eadwacer*, the penultimate line of which is *þæt mon eaþe tosliteð þætte næfre gesomnad wæs* ('so that one easily parts that which was never joined' i.e. a non-marriage).<sup>116</sup> *Wulf and Eadwacer* is a notoriously difficult poem to interpret, but most agree that it presents a female speaker lamenting a tragic love-affair. Fuller argues that the spy of Auden's poem 'represents the individual's emotional urge to make contact with another human being' and that 'love is forced to act as a secret agent because the individual does not consciously recognise his desire (the spy) and represses it'. Certainly this interpretation makes a good deal of sense in the light of 'Paid on Both Sides' and the spy depicted there. Therefore, the significance of *Wulf and Eadwacer* is (as Fuller suggests) in its treatment of unconsummated (and undeclared) love. However, the

<sup>114</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 25 and W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. by Edward Mendelson, 2nd edn. (London: Faber, 1976, 1991), p. 32.

<sup>115</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 180.

propriety of the allusion is felt on many levels which belie the apparent simplicity of this statement. The speaking persona must suppress her love for Wulf while she remains among *leodum minum* ('my people').<sup>117</sup> Moreover, she is forced to act as a secret agent in matters of the heart twice, in the sense that she must participate in another (apparently sexual) relationship with *se beaducafa* ('the battle-boldened one'), about which she is quite ambivalent. Yet Wulf too, is a secret-agent-like figure, attempting to penetrate the defences of the speaker's island without being captured. Separated from his lover/mistress, it could be said of him, as in Auden's poem, that 'running away in the dark, he had often / Reproached the night for a companion / Dreamed of already.' What is more, the speaker twice states that the men of her tribe will kill Wulf if they find him, a detail paralleled by Auden's 'they would shoot, of course'. 'Street music' tempts Auden's spy, deprived of such pleasure, into a trap. Following Fuller's lead in interpreting this poem, 'music' must be figurative of sexual union. Curiously, a similar trope is used in *Wulf and Eadwacer*, where the speaker seems to refer to her relationship with Eadwacer (or its fruit in the form of a child) as a 'song' (*uncer giedd geador*); one which was never bound and easily broken. Now, deprived of her desired accompanist (Wulf), she sings a solo lament. That the use of Anglo-Saxon allusion here is tight and purposeful may partly explain why Auden stood faithfully by this poem while abandoning many others of the same vintage. In the 1933 reprint of *Poems*, 'Control of the passes' was joined by another poem in which the use of Anglo-Saxon has a real purpose and is genuinely effective, indicating that Auden was not shedding Saxonist work as part of a juvenile phase, but strengthening its position within his personal canon of influence.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

Deeper than any Sea-dingle

'Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle'<sup>118</sup> was first printed in *New Signatures* in 1932 as 'Chorus from a Play' and is now known more explicitly as 'The Wanderer'.<sup>119</sup>

Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle.  
 Upon what man it fall  
 In spring, day-wishing flowers appearing,  
 Avalanche sliding, white snow from rock-face,  
 That he should leave his house,  
 No cloud-soft hand can hold him, restraint by women;  
 But ever that man goes  
 Through place-keepers, through forest trees,  
 A stranger to strangers over undried sea,  
 Houses for fishes, suffocating water,  
 Or lonely on fell as chat,  
 By pot-holed becks  
 A bird stone-haunting, an unquiet bird.

There head falls forward, fatigued at evening,  
 And dreams of home,  
 Waving from window, spread of welcome,  
 Kissing of wife under single sheet;  
 But waking sees  
 Bird-flocks nameless to him, through doorway voices  
 Of new men making another love.

Save him from hostile capture,  
 From sudden tiger's spring at corner;  
 Protect his house,  
 His anxious house where days are counted  
 From thunderbolt protect,  
 From gradual ruin spreading like a stain;  
 Converting number from vague to certain,  
 Bring joy, bring day of his returning,  
 Lucky with day approaching, with leaning dawn.

The opening line sounds like a classic Anglo-Saxon measure; the first three of the four main lifts are marked by /d/ alliteration, falling rhythm characterises the first half of the line, while the compound 'sea-dingle' (alliterating on a half-stressed syllable, not the

<sup>118</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>119</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 78. Fuller also notes that 'houses for fishes' recalls the kenning for the sea used in line 60 of *The Seafarer* (*hwæles eþel*) and that 'unquiet' may recall *unstille* from line 76 of *Maxims I*, a poem which Auden uses in other ways, as we shall see. Once again, we find spring inciting a character to travel, as in *The Seafarer*.



'illegal' fourth lift)<sup>120</sup> creates a second stich similar to the 'D'-patterns of Sievers's system. Yet Morton Bloomfield has demonstrated that the immediate source for this line is not Anglo-Saxon, but an early thirteenth-century, Middle English, alliterative prose homily called *Sawles Warde*.<sup>121</sup> Middle English literature as a poetic resource lies outside the immediate focus of this study, though closely related to it. In any case, the terms with which we mark off historical boundaries mean little to the poet with uses for the past: Anglo-Saxon literature blurs over centuries into Middle English, as Auden's easy Saxonisation of this homiletic line readily illustrates.<sup>122</sup>

Bloomfield quotes the Middle English line as: *Ha beoð se wise þat ha witen alle godes reades. his runes ant his domes þe derne beoð ant deopre þen eni sea dingle*. He translates: 'They are so wise that they know all God's counsels, his mysteries, and his dooms [judgements] which are secret and deeper than any sea dingle.'<sup>123</sup> Auden has revealed and tightened a rhythmic pattern already present within a prose sentence. Bloomfield notes other changes such as the translation of *derne*, not with 'secret', but 'dark'. This is comparable to Pound's homophonic method, or Morris's pursuit of the etymological mirage, although Auden uses such a method only when it leads him to an unobtrusive item of modern, everyday lexis. Bloomfield also comments on the change of 'domes' from plural to singular and the difference in 'force and connotation' of 'doom' in modern and Middle English. These last two points are really one and the same, for the modern English word 'doom' is an uncountable noun and so does not have a plural form in normal usage: Auden must change number in escaping judgement.

<sup>120</sup> Although see Ansen, *Table-Talk*, p. 71 where Auden is reported to ask rhetorically: 'besides, doesn't *Beowulf* sometimes alliterate in four places?'

<sup>121</sup> Morton Bloomfield, 'Doom is dark and deeper than any Sea-dingle': W. H. Auden and *Sawles Warde*, *Modern Language Notes*, 58 (1948), 548-52.

<sup>122</sup> In 1962 Auden remarked, 'Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry have been one of my strongest, most lasting influences'. *Dyer's Hand*, p. 42.

As Bloomfield suggests, the allegory of *Sawles Warde* may be of relevance to Auden's poem. In the homily man is represented by the common mediaeval symbol of the castle or house. Wit (reason or intelligence), master of the house, enlists the daughters of the Lord (Prudence, Strength, Moderation and Righteousness), in order to keep in check his mistress Will, and her servants the five senses.<sup>124</sup> Bloomfield points out that 'in both poem and sermon, a house, its master, a feminine household and the fact of the master's leaving the house are all referred to'.<sup>125</sup> He also remarks on the difference in emphasis of the two works: in the homily the focus of interest is the house, whereas Auden's poem is more concerned with the journey of the master/man figure. I will advance another interpretation of Auden's poem, but there are other significant technical details concerning the adaptation of the homiletic line, which Bloomfield does not mention. In the source, *domes* is not only plural, it is one of the objects of *witen*, something *Ha* ('they') understand (the line is spoken by Love of Life, revealing the pleasures enjoyed by those who live according to God's design). In the Middle English *domes* is something which it is possible to know. Auden separates *domes* from its antecedent syntax, turning the object into the subject. The result is dramatic. 'Doom' can not be understood 'upon what man it fall', it is too dark and too deep: God disappears from the poem.

In re-titling the poem 'The Wanderer', Auden more clearly draws attention to the second stanza's re-working of material from the Anglo-Saxon poem of the same name. Once again it is the passage where the speaker wakes to the sight of seabirds which has shipwrecked itself in Auden's imagination. On this occasion, Auden starts his adaptation a

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<sup>123</sup> Bloomfield, ' "Doom is dark" ', p. 550.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 549.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 551.

few lines before the sea-birds motif. His master-of-the-house character falls into a dream of past comforts, just as the speaker of *The Wanderer* does somewhere between lines 39 and 41.<sup>126</sup> Yet whereas the figure in *The Wanderer* dreams of kissing and embracing his lord, Auden's character dreams of his wife, of congress with the passion-ruled Will of the allegorical *Sawles Warde*. The scene also recalls that of the Frisian wife greeting her husband returning home from sea in *Maxims I* (lines 93-9).<sup>127</sup> There the mood is more joyous and implies fulfilment, the woman: *liþ him on londe þæs his lufu bædað* ('sails [or lies] with him on land, as his love demands'). However, Auden breaks off the imagined sexual union and the dreamer wakes to the reality of a flock of birds for companionship. As the poem has shifted emphasis from God to godless and from knowledge to uncertainty, so it also seeks sexual union where the speaker of its source sought social union (in both cases, in vain as it turns out). Mendelson puts the point well when he writes:

He makes no fuss about translating the social isolation of the Old English poem into the psychological isolation of his twentieth-century one. He does not much care if his readers recognize that his lines derive from an ancient source. The point in Auden is not that a distant past has been laboriously recovered for the present, but that a statement about present loneliness and anxiety can be made in terms that the past freely provides.<sup>128</sup>

### From Doom to Joy

It seems likely (although no other commentators deal with it), that the present loneliness concerning Auden here, is the anxiety of acknowledging his sexuality. Unlike the sailor of *Maxims I*, Auden's stranger to strangers finds no comfort with a woman, but, from beyond the threshold of a doorway not yet crossed, he hears 'voices / of new men making another love'. The speaker of *The Wanderer* dreams of laying his head on his lord's lap because it is a gesture of intimacy betweenthane and lord. In Auden's poem, the

<sup>126</sup> *The Exeter Book*, p. 135.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

potential for eroticism in this image is transferred to a dream of heterosexual intimacy which does not satisfy the dreamer. Perhaps the passion-ruled, mistress Will needs to be kept from the house of this figure (stanza three: 'save him from hostile capture', 'protect his house'), not because she will corrupt his soul, but because she will compromise his ability to come to terms with his real sexual needs. 'Number' is being converted 'from vague to certain': an ambiguous line about ambiguous sexuality? Changing number may suggest grammatical accident, where verbs are changed from singular to plural, or plural to singular. The stranger to strangers is growing into the confirmed singularity of his homosexuality, rather than attempting to lead a plural (double) life.

With the caveat that autobiographical criticism can often be reductive, it might be worth recording that Auden was considering such a double life in the late 1920s, for he was briefly engaged to a nurse, who seems to have been called Sheilah.<sup>129</sup> He broke off the engagement in July 1929, the year the idea of 'The Fronny', for which this poem was intended, was first sown in Berlin. In 1933, the year 'Doom is dark' was published, he still referred to homosexuality as 'a naughty habit', suggesting he had not yet come to terms with his orientation.<sup>130</sup> As the character in his poem converts number from vague to certain, joy, luck and dawn are imminent, in contrast to the dark doom with which the poem began. Soon the stranger will return to the home he left in the first stanza, when stirred to sexual awakening by spring. Few might expect that thousand-year-old mediaeval poetry can provide a twentieth-century poet with a resource for writing about the anxiety of coming to terms with one's sexuality, but that seems to be part of the reason why Auden presses Anglo-Saxon into service in 'Doom is dark'.

<sup>128</sup> Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden* (London: Faber, 1981), p. 46.

<sup>129</sup> In 1928, Auden also pointedly wrote to a friend, 'I find I am quite ambidextrous now'. Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, pp. 82-4.

### Evaluating the Early Saxonist Work

Auden's early use of Anglo-Saxon is not always this purposeful. He has a less systematised view of period and style than Pound and he picks up and alludes to literature of all periods in his early poetry. Striking texture and evocative mood are of more importance to Auden's early work than a coherent correspondence between styles and the uses to which they are put. 'Bones wrenched' feels Saxonesque, but to no discernible purpose. 'Nor was that final' constructs some kind of thematic link from references to *The Dream of the Rood*, the Bible, Shakespeare and Eliot, but it remains (perhaps wilfully) obscure. The inter-textual play of this writing might be considered justification enough, but many of the younger Auden's references are too concealed and too inconsistent to be considered as a kind of 'postmodernist' virtue. Moreover, these early works continuously make gestures towards knowledge. Auden's references and private symbols are not content to be mere surfaces of *écriture*, writing for its own sake. They constantly point beyond themselves to a wisdom or universal 'truth' which all too frequently they do not possess, or manage to suggest in only the most vague and flimsy of ways. It is as if the young Auden's technique has far outrun the use to which he is able to put it, or, borrowing Edward Mendelson's words from a different context, Auden can 'remember the *forms* of tradition, not its meaning'.<sup>131</sup>

However, this is to pick on the weakest poems of a young writer. Soon, the specific allusions of adolescence are dropped, only their technical legacy remains. In 'Since you are going to begin to-day', the third poem of both the 1930 and 1933 editions of *Poems*,<sup>132</sup> the poet reflects on another 'dead' language:

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-5.

<sup>131</sup> Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 44-5 & 432.

Think - Romans had a language in their day  
 And ordered roads with it, but it had to die:  
 Your culture can but leave - forgot as sure  
 As place-name origins in favourite shire-  
 Jottings for stories, some often-mentioned Jack,  
 And references in letters to a private joke,  
 Equipment rusting in unweeded lanes,

Auden's allusions to Anglo-Saxon are the equivalent of private jokes to most readers, but the linguistic equipment is not being allowed to rust without some resistance. In his juvenilia, Auden is weeding the lanes of early English so that he may again order roads with it. Anglo-Saxon may be almost 'forgot' to British culture, but if blended with our more recent poetic heritage Auden knows it may provide a vital new fusion of traditions, just as the impact of Anglo-Norman French once had on the 'native' tradition. For as he says in part three of 'It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens' (poem XVI in both editions of *Poems*):<sup>133</sup>

And as foreign settlers to strange country come,  
 By mispronunciation of native words  
 And by intermarriage create a new race  
 And a new language, so may the soul  
 Be weaned at last to independent delight.<sup>134</sup>

Ironically, twentieth-century readers and writers are so much the product of the original Anglo-Norman intermarriage that they are now foreign settlers come back to the strange country of their original, Anglo-Saxon, linguistic homeland. Auden is determined, by mispronunciation if necessary, to create a new poetic language, as his intermarriage of four-stress beats and tercet stanza-forms testifies. Marrying mediaeval and modern traditions is one of the ways in which he achieves this new language. According to Humphrey Carpenter, in a letter to John Pudney in April 1931, now in the Berg collection of the New York Public Library, Auden wrote:

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 37-40 & 432.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 39.



In general the further away from you in time or feeling that poets are, the more you can get out of them for your own use. Often some piece of technique thus learnt really unchains one's own Daimon quite suddenly.<sup>135</sup>

In a sense, almost all the early poems, and 'Paid on Both Sides' are practice-poems.

Auden's Daimon was to be suddenly unchained, in part by the technique of distant Anglo-Saxon poets in his Second World War poem 'The Age of Anxiety'. Before coming to that poem, one more stage in the development of Auden's Anglo-Saxon poetic must be dealt with, *The Orators*.

### Oratory and Anglo-Saxon

Completed in 1931, *The Orators* continues many of the themes set out in 'Paid on Both Sides'.<sup>136</sup> both are concerned with the leadership that a heroic man of action can show the modern world. Both develop an allegory about how the private individual is accommodated (or not) by the wider community,<sup>137</sup> as the dedicatory epigram to Spender hints ('Private faces in public places / Are wiser and nicer / Than public faces in private places').<sup>138</sup> There is a great leap in the degree of sophistication with which these themes are pursued, but other concerns are also raised by *The Orators*. In particular, Auden had aspirations to be a public poet, for which he needed to develop a public voice. In tension with this desire, is Auden's awareness that public voices are often instruments of control and manipulation. Rhetoric is not just a technical repertoire, but a pejorative term for empty or misleading speech. Auden does not only write about oratory, he attempts to find a form of it he can practise with a clear conscience. In the political climate of the 1930s this was pressing, as was the need to define an appropriate role for the individual within a group with extreme beliefs. Anglo-Saxon poetry was a public literature, used to

<sup>135</sup> Carpenter, *W. H. Auden*, p. 55.

<sup>136</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 59-110.

police (normally strengthen) the bond between individual and tribe. The rhetorical possibilities which Anglo-Saxon offers for a public poetic voice are developed and interrogated in *The Orators*.

Subtitled 'An English Study' (and including the roots of English), *The Orators*, consisting of a prologue, three central books, and an epilogue, is notoriously difficult to interpret. Even its own author expressed doubts about it on the eve of publication: 'I feel this book is more obscure than it ought to be.'<sup>139</sup> The conventional interpretation of *The Orators* posits a (mostly absent) mysterious leader-figure, who has a powerful, but dangerous charismatic attraction for his followers. This key was first suggested, with reservations, by Auden:

The central theme is a revolutionary hero. The first book describes the effect of him and of his failure on those whom he meets; the second book is his own account; and the last some personal reflections on the question of leadership in our time.<sup>140</sup>

Parts of *The Orators* remain obscure, despite the thesis of the revolutionary hero. In the absence of an entirely persuasive interpretation of the whole work, I intend to show how Auden's use of Anglo-Saxon in *The Orators* feeds into the debate on leadership and public instruction, which is at least a major theme, if not the whole explication.

Book I, ('The Initiates') is divided into four parts, parts two and three of which are further divided into three subsections each. These two central parts of 'The Initiates' draw on Anglo-Saxon poetry, part II in an incidental manner and part III more centrally. Fuller remarks that 'The Initiates' is 'largely about how the "orators", with their varying degrees

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<sup>137</sup> For a more detailed exposition of the work, see Fuller, *Commentary*, pp. 85-122, & Mendelson, *Early Auden*, pp. 93-116.

<sup>138</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 59.

<sup>139</sup> From a prefatory note which he suggested be added to Faber's edition. Eliot decided not to use the note, which he felt was too apologetic. Cited in Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p. 96.

<sup>140</sup> From the same discarded prefatory note. *Ibid.*

of perception and evasiveness, are trained in the specious rhetoric of self-justification'.<sup>141</sup>

Fuller also quotes from a letter of Auden's:

The four parts, corresponding if you like to the four seasons and the four stages of man (Boyhood, Sturm und Drang, Middleage, Oldage), are stages in the development of the influence of the Hero (who never appears at all).

Thus Part 1. Introduction to influence.

Part 2. Personally involved with hero. Crisis

Part 3. Intellectual reconstruction of Hero's teaching. The cerebral life.

Part 4. The effect of Hero's failure on the emotional life.<sup>142</sup>

The introduction to influence is executed with, 'Address for a Prize-day', a spoof, prose monologue delivered at a school prize-day by a returning old boy. The speaker offers the boys moral instruction, partly based on the account in Dante's *Divine Comedy* of those sinners guilty of excessive love. However, the speaker's cliché-ridden speech and reversion to schoolboy bullying at the end of his address reveal him to be completely inadequate as a moral instructor. As in 'Paid', the competitive world of the English public schoolboy is linked to violence.

According to Auden's scheme, part II, 'Argument', deals with the sense of personal attachment that young men and women feel to the public image of an absent hero. An entertaining parody of an Anglican hymn makes up the second section of 'Argument', complete with antiphonal responses in which the congregation ask to be delivered by various fictional detectives and heard by jocularly-named public houses.<sup>143</sup> This hymn is sandwiched between two prose sections, each of which makes minor use of Anglo-Saxon mannerisms. Section I, in which the speaker seems to be waiting eagerly for the hero's instruction to spring into action, begins with the epic 'Lo'.<sup>144</sup> As an opening rhetorical gambit with epic pretensions, this interjection has been used throughout much of English

<sup>141</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 89.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 90, from a letter to Naomi Mitchison on 12 August 1931, now in the Berg collection.

<sup>143</sup> Fuller notes: 'private detectives and public houses is, I think, the thematic joke'. *Commentary*, p. 95.

literary history, but in particular has been a common translation of *hwæt*, found at the start of several Anglo-Saxon poems (including *Beowulf*, *Exodus*, *The Dream of the Rood* and *Juliana*). In the same opening paragraph, 'dawn-gust' has the flavour of an Anglo-Saxon compound, and 'derne', a word common to both Anglo-Saxon and Middle English (modernised to 'dark' in 'Doom is dark and deeper') makes an undisguised appearance towards the end of the section, where it describes a 'cutting'.<sup>145</sup> Perhaps more telling are the number of phrases built from two alliterating stressed syllables: 'lanterns for lambing', 'a call to our clearing', 'banks of baths', 'wounds among wheat-fields', 'at the back of the byre', 'prepare a present', 'a warning of wires' and 'screaming for scraps'.<sup>146</sup> These phrases are suggestive of Anglo-Saxon verse, but are not combined with larger units to form passages of regular metre. It would be an extremely strained exercise to re-lineate these lines. Rather, these Saxonesque nuggets are subsumed within a prose style which is noun- and infinitive-heavy, characterised by apposition and a retreat from hierarchical syntax: all of which is reminiscent of an early poem like 'Bones wrenched', although a good deal more coherent.

Section III of 'Argument' contains similar, but fewer Saxonisms. The inversion of its opening sentence, 'came one after a ruined harvest',<sup>147</sup> is imitative of an inflected language (the verb in first position sounds very like Pound in his Anglo-Saxon mode: 'cometh beauty of berries'). One or two phrases have the Saxonesque phrasing detected in the first section: 'from the nipping North Righteousness running' is a notable example, being a four stress 'line' (although not in a permissible Anglo-Saxon pattern of

<sup>144</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 64.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-6. This last phrase comes from a passage in which seagulls seem to signal a departure; perhaps yet another re-imagining of the seabirds to which the wanderer wakes?

<sup>147</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 68.

alliteration).<sup>148</sup> What was said about apposition and the substantive-heavy nature of section I is also true of this section of 'Argument': the pace of the prose reminds one of Anglo-Saxon verse, even if there is a paucity of specific details or allusions.

Compilatio and Ordinatio: Cutting up *The Exeter Book*

Paucity of detail and allusion there is not in the third part of Book I, 'Statement'. Both Fuller and Mendelson plausibly suggest that 'Statement' is a kind of nostalgic reconstruction, by the former initiates, of the hero's teachings after his departure. 'The Initiates' promised future instruction. In 'Argument', the heroic leader was never present, but referred to (with a capitalised pronoun), as if He were about to appear and offer the community the leadership it craved. In 'Statement' that moment, if it occurred at all, has passed. The waiting of 'Argument' is over and the group is left to the interpretation of its sacred texts. Present anticipation has become reverence of the past. The absurdity and triviality of much of the absent leader's wisdom, as reconstructed here, indicates the inability of the people to live mature and independent lives, and their failure to understand what has been taught to them. Mendelson notes that 'all the lists in this section are parodied from the Old English *Exeter Book*',<sup>149</sup> while Fuller more specifically suggests that the first section of 'Statement' draws on *The Gifts of Men*, the second on *The Fortunes of Men* and the third on *Maxims I*.<sup>150</sup> Close allusion to, and parody of these

<sup>148</sup> Compare *The Wanderer*, lines 104-5: *nipeð nihtscua, norþan onsended / hreo hæglfare* ('night-shadow grows dark, from north sends wild hailstorms'). *The Exeter Book*, pp. 136-7. See also *The Seafarer*, line 31: *nap nihtscua, norþan sniwe* ('night-shadow grew dark, it snowed from the north'). *The Exeter Book*, p. 144.

<sup>149</sup> Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p. 100.

<sup>150</sup> Fuller actually calls the third poem 'Maxims', remarking that 'These three poems appear in different parts of the Exeter Book, but are printed together in R. K. Gordon's *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (1926), which Auden had probably used' (Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 96). Fuller must therefore mean *Maxims I*, and not the separate poem *Maxims II*, which is preserved in a different manuscript, MS. Cotton Tiberius B.I. Strictly speaking, Gordon does not print them together, but next to each other under separate headings; 'Gnomic Poetry', 'The Arts of Men' and 'The Fate of Men' (*Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, trans. by R. K. Gordon, 2nd edn (London: Dent, 1926, 1954), pp. 309-19). This order is different to that used by Auden in 'Statement'. While Auden may have used Gordon, there is in fact no evidence that this is the case. He could have



three Anglo-Saxon poems make up almost the entire bulk of 'Statement' (although a fourth Anglo-Saxon poem completes Auden's sources, as will be demonstrated). Sequentially, Auden's re-interpretations of *The Gifts of Men*, *The Fortunes of Men* and *Maxims I* follow the same order in which they are recorded in *The Exeter Book* (although only the latter two are actually adjacent in the codex). 'Statement', therefore, constructs a gnomic narrative, based on a similar narrative present, but buried, in *The Exeter Book*. Common to the three poems is a mixture of moralizing and proverbial folk-wisdom.<sup>151</sup> Auden deliberately misrepresents and simplifies his source, even before we start to consider the specific distortions and parodies of the Anglo-Saxon catalogues in 'Statement', for many *Exeter Book* poems of similar material have been left out of this summation of tribal wisdom. In *The Exeter Book*, the immediate, sequential context is as follows; *The Wanderer*, *The Gifts of Men*, *Precepts*, *The Seafarer*, *Vainglory*, *Widsith*, *The Fortunes of Men*, *Maxims I*, *The Order of the World*. All of them may be said to embody communal wisdom in some manner, but *The Orators'* version of this communal wisdom is offered only in précis. Auden's construction of 'Statement' out of *The Exeter Book*, therefore, parallels (deliberately I suggest), the initiates' reconstruction of their hero's teaching: both are the product of distortion, re-wording (translation) and the

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accessed the poems from a variety of sources. *Maxims I* and *Maxims II* were published in *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon*, ed. by Blanche Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966). A text and translation for *The Gifts of Men* had been available since 1895, when it was included (as 'The Endowments of Men') in *The Exeter Book: Part I*, ed. and trans. by Israel Gollancz (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1895), pp. 292-9. All three of *The Exeter Book* poems in question had been edited and translated by Benjamin Thorpe in 1842.

<sup>151</sup> Introducing the 'Gnomic Poetry' (*Maxims I* and *Maxims II* often went by the alternative titles of the 'Exeter Gnomes' and the 'Cotton Gnomes', after their manuscripts), Gordon writes: 'they show no great beauty [...] but they are interesting as illustrating an early stage in poetic development.' Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 309. That these poems are very early and 'primitive' had been commonly accepted for a number of years. Sweet remarks: 'the so-called gnomic verses show poetry in its earliest form, and are no doubt of great antiquity, although they may have been altered in later times.' Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 168. See also Frederick Metcalfe, *The Englishman and the Scandinavian; or a comparison of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Literature* (London: Trübner, 1880), p. 147 and *An Anglo-Saxon Reader*, ed. by Alfred J. Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), p. 259.



sewing together of non-proximate parts. In both there is much that is left out: missing knowledge.

It seems to be a common human desire that communities and nation states should be built on common, cultural values, accumulated over a long passage of history: people frequently go to great lengths to preserve such inheritances, or invent them if they do not exist, so great is the need for them.<sup>152</sup> The instability and unreliability of textual transmission of these inheritances from one generation to the next is nicely illustrated by *The Exeter Book* (the genesis and use of which we know practically nothing about), and by the major surgery which Auden performs on it. It is noteworthy that the entirety of 'Statement' is set in large blocks of justified prose (a trick from 'Paid'), despite being mostly constructed from discrete phrases of two and three stressed syllables; i.e.

Saxonesque half-lines, or half-hyper-metric lines. What had appeared to be prose in manuscript, until antiquarians realised otherwise and set about scanning and re-lineating, has now been parodied, distorted and re-presented once again as prose.<sup>153</sup> What is gained in knowledge is easily lost. How many of the initiates, following the editorially re-tinkered teaching of 'Statement', will realise they are trying to live by the ghost of forgotten poetry? In the first part of 'Statement' we are told that 'one can emend a mutilated text'. It is unclear whether this ability is to be taken, at face value, as a useful gift, or whether the very process of composition in 'Statement', and the blind faith put in

<sup>152</sup> This thesis traces one such aspect (in poetry) of that tendency. The essays included in Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* are also testament to this, although the argument that tradition is Victorian 'invention' needs massive qualification. *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>153</sup> Auden puts the first and second sections of 'Statement' into paragraphs in order to emphasize the essentially tripartite structure of both *Gifts* and *Fortunes* (not shared with *Maxims*, Auden's version of which is paragraphed according to a different principle). This structural awareness argues for a source other than Gordon's prose translation, which does not make any paragraph divisions in its version of *Gifts*.

such emended texts, casts doubt upon the desirability of such a service (although it does give the reader a clue to Auden's methods).<sup>154</sup>

Like *The Gifts of Men*, the first section of 'Statement' consists of a central listing passage, fronted and ended by smaller passages relating the gifts to their provenance.<sup>155</sup>

Comparing Auden's piece with its *Exeter Book* source,<sup>156</sup> Fuller points out that a substantial change has been made at the start of the piece by redefining the ascription of human talents.<sup>157</sup> In *The Gifts of Men* all gifts are granted by God,<sup>158</sup> in 'Statement' the attributes of men are instead determined by the kind of material factors Marx and Darwin analyzed: 'to each an award, suitable to his sex, his class and the power.'<sup>159</sup> This lack of acknowledgement and gratitude to God the Father is reinforced by the closing lines of 'Statement', section I. We are informed: 'And there passed such cursing his father, and the curse was given him.' Abilities are hereditary, but the progenitor is cursed, rather than praised, for bestowing them.

Syntactically, the parallels between *Gifts* and 'Statement I' are extremely close. In their enumeration of human talents, both constantly reiterate the third person, impersonal

<sup>154</sup> Three of the questions set in Auden's final examination papers ask candidates to confront the state of texts found in mediaeval manuscripts: paper II, question 14, 'give the forms of the letters of the alphabet as commonly found in Anglo-Saxon MSS., and indicate how these occasion confusion and error in transcription'; paper V(a), question 5, 'what do you know of any differences between the first and second hand in the *Beowulf* MS. in respect of forms and spellings used, liability to error, and general characteristics?'; paper V(b), question 10, 'how have each of the following been preserved: - *The Laws of Ine*, *The Fall of the Angels* (Genesis B), *The Battle of Maldon*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Judith*? Describe in some detail one of these.' It is therefore likely that Auden was aware of the potential for corruption and instability in mediaeval texts, and the authorial role which scribes often played in re-writing the texts they copied.

<sup>155</sup> On extended lists, see Auden's inaugural lecture as the Oxford Professor of Poetry, 11 June 1956, where he cites a liking for 'long lists of proper names such as the Old Testament genealogies or the Catalogue of ships in the *Iliad*' as one of the benchmarks of a critic's good taste. 'Making Knowing and Judging', in *Dyer's Hand*, pp. 31-60 (p. 47).

<sup>156</sup> *The Exeter Book*, pp. 137-40.

<sup>157</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 96.

<sup>158</sup> See lines 4-6. *The Exeter Book*, p. 137.

<sup>159</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 69.

pronoun (*sum*: 'one'), in each case governing a new complement. However, there are many, more specific relationships between the two texts than this. Both poems deploy three main grammatical patterns in their central list-passage: *sum*/one followed by a finite verb; *sum*/one followed by a copula; and *sum*/one with a modal verb of ability (*mæg* or 'can'). The first two structures are commonplace in language and their presence in both poems is not, in itself, indicative of a shared structure, but Auden's frequent use of the third pattern is more revealing. Furthermore, *Gifts* will occasionally add a second phrase in apposition to a *sum*-clause, which does not re-state the subject. *Sum bið deormod deofles gewinnes, / bið a wið firenum in gefeoht gearo* ('one is courageous in the struggle with the devil, is always ready in the fight against sins'),<sup>160</sup> is essentially constructed in the same manner employed by 'one has prominent eyes, is bold at accosting'. Auden uses this structure infrequently, but definingly throughout his list.

Thematic parallels are also more widespread than Fuller's account suggests, although they are by no means precise. Lines 34-5 of *Gifts* inform us that *sum freolic bið / wlitig on wæstmum* ('one is charming, beautiful of figure').<sup>161</sup> This is the third example from the Anglo-Saxon catalogue, but Auden has moved it to the opening of his passage and expanded the remark into a prominent homo-erotic celebration of beauty: 'one charms by thickness of wrist; one by variety of positions; one has a beautiful skin, one a fascinating smell. One has prominent eyes, is bold at accosting.'<sup>162</sup> Where we had one beautiful figure, we now have five, appealing in different ways and for different reasons, not in their (nameless) whole selves, but as dismembered parts. During his time in Berlin (1928-9, shortly before the composition of *The Orators*), Auden often picked up young

<sup>160</sup> Lines 89-90. *The Exeter Book*, p. 139.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

men (whose names he did not always know) for casual sex; perhaps attracted by similar charms to those expressed in 'Statement'.<sup>163</sup> It is hard to avoid the thought that Auden is using the generalized terms of the Anglo-Saxon aphorism in order to give public expression to private desires or experiences.

Next in Auden's account is that 'one has water sense; he can dive like a swallow without using his hands', clearly an elaboration on the rather bare, *sum bið syndig* ('one is skilful at swimming').<sup>164</sup> Where *Gifts* depicts a hunter,<sup>165</sup> 'Statement' remarks that 'one is obeyed by dogs, one can bring down snipe on the wing.' Auden's passage notes that 'one is eloquent, persuades committees of the value of spending', and public oratory plays as prominent a role in *Gifts* as it does in *The Orators*.<sup>166</sup> Both pieces also contain architects, musicians and metal-smiths.<sup>167</sup> It must be emphasized that Auden is not translating specific phrases from *Gifts*, but neither is he merely filling the form which that poem has suggested to him with new material of his own devising. Rather, he is performing variations on some of its themes and motifs, altering and distorting them according to his whim. Sometimes, the variations carry him a long way from the original, to comic effect. Lines 82-4 of *Gifts* tell us that *sum is swiðsnel, hafað searolic gomen, / gleodæda gife for gumpegnum, / leoht ond leopuwac*,<sup>168</sup> while in 'Statement' we read that 'one can do cart wheels before theatre queues', and later that 'one amuses by pursing his lips'. Perhaps

<sup>162</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 69. See also 'Letter to Lord Byron'; 'I like to see the various types of boys' (p. 192).

<sup>163</sup> See Carpenter's chapter on Berlin in *W. H. Auden*, pp. 85-110, in particular p. 97.

<sup>164</sup> Line 58. *The Exeter Book*, p. 139.

<sup>165</sup> Lines 37-8. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>166</sup> See line 36: *sum biþ gearuwyrdig* ('one is ready with words'); lines 41-3: *sum in mædle mæg modsnotta / folcrædenne forð gehycgan, / þær witena biþ worn ætsomne* ('one can determine for the public benefit in a council of wise-men, where a crowd of elders are together'); lines 72-3: *sum domas con, þær dryhtguman / ræd eahtiað* ('one knows laws, where men deliberate council'); and lines 84-5: *sum bið leofwende, / hafað mod ond word monnum gepwære* ('one is gracious, has spirit and words pleasant to men'). Teaching book-wisdom is also mentioned at lines 94-5. *The Exeter Book*, pp. 138-40.

<sup>167</sup> Lines 44-50 & 61-6. *Ibid.*, p. 138-9.

the most significant variation Auden makes in his pursuit of comedy is the introduction of gifts which are so banal as to be hardly worth mentioning: 'one is clumsy but amazes by his knowledge of time-tables', perhaps a private joke.<sup>169</sup> *The Gifts of Men* is meant in earnest and presumably the initiates of *The Orators* take 'Statement' in earnest, but 'one delivers buns in a van, halting at houses', and 'one has an extraordinary capacity for organizing study circles' indicate to the reader that this 'wisdom poetry' should not be taken seriously. At face value, the last entry in Auden's list seems to endorse idleness: 'one does nothing at all but is good'. The aim is not, however, to establish a body of immoral maxims, but to satirize and undermine the kind of 'common sense' values which can be cynically manipulated in order to support a leader's cult of personality. *Gifts* catalogues the ways in which individuals may be socially useful to the tribe and the orators must intend 'Statement' to do the same, but somewhere in the transmission of the list of contributions one may make, that intention has been perverted. Here we see the poet as prankster, 'emending' mutilated texts. It is possible to read 'Statement' as a private joke at the expense of his erstwhile teachers and examiners of Anglo-Saxon, who think they can emend mutilated texts, while the poet further mutilates them for creative reasons, adding to the labour of scholars.<sup>170</sup> In any case, the last entry in the Anglo-Saxon catalogue is that 'one is list-handly at writing mysterious-words',<sup>171</sup> surely a skill added by a wry scribe at some point. Auden does not re-work this detail, he does not need to: in the performance of his prose-poem he has actually become that 'one'.

<sup>168</sup> 'One is very agile and has artistic tricks, a gift for amusing deeds in front of people, light and supple'. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>169</sup> The inadequate compensation of this line was perhaps suggested to Auden by the *wonspedig* ('poor') man, *heardselig hæle* ('unhappy in health'), who is nevertheless *gleaw modes cræfte* ('skilful in the arts of the mind'). Lines 31-3. *The Exeter Book*, p. 138.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Crawford has written plausibly on *The Orators* as a poem of revenge against the Oxford examiners who gave him a third. See Robert Crawford, 'Exam Poem', *Critical Survey*, 6 (1994), 304-11, in particular pp. 309-10.



Section II of 'Statement'<sup>172</sup> has a similar relationship to *The Fortunes of Men*.<sup>173</sup> The central list-passage of *Fortunes*, enumerating the fates which men suffer, is sandwiched between an introduction and conclusion which emphasize that the destiny of each individual is decided by God's grace. Auden preserves this tripartite structure, and its approximate proportions, again removing all reference to God.<sup>174</sup> He also adheres to an important structural division within the central list: the catalogue of potential misfortunes ends at line 58 of *Fortunes*, after which the poem deals with happier destinies (reverting to a pattern reminiscent of the catalogue of talents in *Gifts*). Auden breaks his central list (which again deploys the *sum/one* formula) with the remark: 'always think of the others'. Thereafter we read examples like 'one is saved from drowning by a submerged stake', to counter the earlier 'one gets cramp in the bay, sinks like a stone near crowded tea-shops'. Specific parallels with *Fortunes* are fewer than with *Gifts*: 'one drinks alone in another country' may be based on the Anglo-Saxon *sum* who *sceal on feþe on feorwegas nyde gongan*, friendless and in hostile territory (or Auden, in a Berlin bar).<sup>175</sup> In other respects it is the refashioning of the catalogue which is more important than adhering to it. In 'Statement' men are less likely to suffer the fate of blindness, becoming lame, or of famine, than they are to suffer from afflictions diagnosed by modern psychiatry; 'one believes himself to be two persons, is restrained with straps. One cannot remember the day of the week. One is impotent from fear of the judgement.'

<sup>171</sup> *Sum biþ listhendig / to awritanne wordgeryno*. Lines 95-6. *The Exeter Book*, p. 140.

<sup>172</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 70.

<sup>173</sup> *The Exeter Book*, pp. 154-6.

<sup>174</sup> Auden may have been influenced here by Blanche Williams. She states that the opening of *Gifts* is 'obviously the composition of a monk', as is 'the homiletic close'. The bulk of the remainder has 'a heathen ring'. *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon*, p. 53. Her view of *Fortunes* is similar (pp. 57-8). The general principle of looking for Christian 'additions' to cut from 'original' poems was common in scholarship of the time and Auden may simply be following the general prejudice (as Pound had in his 'Seafarer').

<sup>175</sup> 'He must, of necessity, go on foot along distant roads.' Lines 27-32. *The Exeter Book*, p. 154.



Auden is not interested here in purifying the dialect of the tribe, but rather in diagnosing the illness of the tribe. Anglo-Saxon provides him not so much with a linguistic resource, but an instructional aid, a moralistic tool even. The earliest wisdom of the English people is used to dissect and expose the dubious ideology with which late imperial England (not Britain, for this is 'An English Study') perpetuates itself. Auden is happy to take great liberties with his source material in order to probe these social constructs, even to the point of presenting bathetic versions of Anglo-Saxon gnomic literature. He focuses with increasing clarity on the diseased condition of twentieth-century states and their dependence on absolute leadership: with playful humour, the mediaeval might cure the modern.

The third section of 'Statement',<sup>176</sup> has the most ambiguous relationship to an *Exeter Book* analogue of all three. *Maxims I*, which Fuller identifies as the main source, begins with an account of how all life is granted by God.<sup>177</sup> Like its companion pieces, 'Statement III' dispenses with the homiletic material, instead replacing it with a strictly biological account of the origin of life:

An old one is beginning to be two new ones. Two new ones are beginning to be two old ones.  
Two old ones are beginning to be one new one. A new one is beginning to be an old one.

Single-cell, self-dividing life slowly morphs into the mating union of two creatures to bring forth a third. Fuller invites comparison between this passage and lines 23-5 of *Maxims I*,<sup>178</sup> which state that: *tu beoð gemæccan; / sceal wif ond wer in woruld cennan / bearn mid gebyrdum*.<sup>179</sup> Likewise, the opening line of the second paragraph: 'life is many', may have been suggested by the affirmation of fecundity in *Maxims I*: *feorhcynna*

<sup>176</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 70-1.

<sup>177</sup> *The Exeter Book*, pp. 156-63.

<sup>178</sup> Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 98. He quotes in translation from Gordon, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 309.

<sup>179</sup> 'Two are mates; woman and man must bring forth children in birth into the world'. *The Exeter Book*, p. 157.

*fela fæþmep wide / eglond monig*.<sup>180</sup> 'Statement III' explicates this variety with a list of animals and their attributes. However, such a passage is much closer to *Maxims II*, a different poem preserved in an entirely separate manuscript,<sup>181</sup> where a catalogue of animals is also found.<sup>182</sup> *Maxims II* also uses the formula '[noun] is [superlative adjective]' to refer to seasons and weather, but this structure is not characteristic of *Maxims I*. Auden combines this syntactical pattern with the material of the animal catalogue to give us lines like, 'Eagle is proudest. Bull is stupidest, oppressed by blood.'

After this abundance of life, Auden's next paragraph enumerates the roles or responsibilities of people according to their station and occupation. The entire passage is structured on the pattern 'the [noun] shall [verb/verb+object]' and is clearly based on the Anglo-Saxon formula using *sceal* (normally translated with the force of 'must', although in *Maxims II* a good argument can often be made for 'belongs to/in'). This formula is found throughout both the poems called *Maxims*, where it is predominantly used to describe the properties of inanimate objects. In contrast, Auden's passage is concerned solely with what various people 'shall' do. It is not possible to identify specific echoes from one rather than the other,<sup>183</sup> and it seems likely that Auden has simply pilfered both poems on a whim to create 'Statement III'. It was not until Eduard Sievers' masterly detective work in the late nineteenth century that scholars realised that the poem in the *Junius* manuscript which describes the creation and the Fall of man was not one work, but

<sup>180</sup> 'Many an island broadly embraces many kinds of life'. Lines 14-15. *The Exeter Book*, p. 157.

<sup>181</sup> MS. Cotton Tiberius B.I. *Maxims II* is the only example of wisdom-literature contained in Sweet, and so is likely to have had a wider early dissemination to students of Anglo-Saxon, than the *Exeter Book* poems. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, pp. 168-70. Text also in *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 55-7.

<sup>182</sup> Compare Auden's 'in the salmon an arrow leaping in the ladder' with *fisc sceal on wætere / cynren cennan* ('fish must spawn offspring in the water'), lines 27-8 of *Maxims II*, and *leax sceal on wæle / mid sceote scridan* ('salmon must glide with trout in the pool'), lines 39-40, Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, p. 169.

<sup>183</sup> *Maxims I* contains slightly more people-centred lines, while a thief is mentioned in both Auden's piece and in *Maxims II*.

two, sewn together by a scribe, but now differentiated as *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*. Reversing this process, and mirroring the mediaeval practice of *compilatio*, Auden collapses two independent poems into one work, in an act of scribal creativity, or vandalism, depending on one's point of view.<sup>184</sup> The stitching is professional enough for Auden scholars not to have noticed, and two old poems have begun to be one new one, waiting to be unstitched again, as the *Junius* Genesis poems once were.

Many examples of textual instability are manifest in 'Statement': the reduction of two poems into one; the presentation of poetry as prose; the editing out of poems and sections of poems which do not fit the present purpose; quite free improvisation on the wording and material of the source. This game of textual instability, in many ways like the assemblages of the modernist avant-garde, is very much part of Auden's purpose in 'Statement'. Each generation flatters itself to believe it is in a better position to divine the original intention behind certain textual documents, be they poetic, scriptural, or historical. While the advances of scholarship can bring such a goal closer, the corruption of texts over time and the greater cultural remove at which we find ourselves from the world of a text's production mean that gains and losses often cancel each other out. In truth, each generation reinterprets the text for itself. Realisation of this is a liberating act of creativity if the reader's aim is poetry, but an almost heretical proposition, the truth of which must be denied, if one is trying to construct a moral code from knowledge transmitted under such circumstances, as the initiates in Auden's *Orators* seem to be attempting. The title, 'Statement', suggests the unambiguous setting out of a point of

<sup>184</sup> Gordon silently, and confusingly, appends his translation of the Cotton Manuscript *Maxims II* to his version of *Maxims I*, giving it the section numeral IV of something called 'Gnomic Poetry' (the Exeter Book *Maxims* seems to be marked into three sub-sections by small capitals in the manuscript, something Williams' edition acknowledges by the letters A, B and C). Gordon of course knew they were not parts of one poem, but Auden's complete blurring of the two poems is quite different to Gordon's placing them side-by-side as discrete sections.

view to be adhered to: the dramatic irony experienced by a reader literate in Anglo-Saxon poetry is that 'His' followers are trying to adhere to mutilated texts which have been emended, not for their edification and best interest, but according to the whim of a scribe/translator with a particularly camp sense of humour. Small wonder that for one follower the attempt ends, in the final part of 'The Initiates', with a 'Letter to a Wound', the admission of a profound self-inflicted psychological illness.

#### Instructing the Elite: the Airman's Alphabet

Textual metaphors are not used in the remainder of *The Orators*, but the Anglo-Saxon-literate reader has become more suspicious of the apparent authority of the rest of the text. Book II of *The Orators*, 'Journal of an Airman',<sup>185</sup> examines the poem's world from the perspective of the leader, but the reliability of his 'journal' and the processes by which it has been transmitted are now much more suspect than would be the case for a reader innocent of the problems thrown up by 'Statement' and its *Exeter Book* relationship.

In *The Orators*, the fighter pilot appears to be the twentieth-century embodiment of the heroic ideal; the new knight-of-the-air who is able to liberate himself from the normal constraints of his environment (although this airman does not live up to that ideal).

Anglo-Saxon is not extensively employed in 'Journal of an Airman': perhaps Auden has begun to see it as a resource for specifically communal utterances; the airman is too much of an individual to express himself in Saxonist verse. However, there is 'The Airman's Alphabet': twenty-six words connected with military aviation are each defined by three, two-stress, alliterative lines, for example:

BOMB-

Curse from cloud  
and coming to crook

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<sup>185</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 73-94.

and saddest steeple.

COCKPIT-                      Soft seat  
                                      and support of soldier  
                                      and hold for hero.<sup>186</sup>

Robert Crawford writes that Auden 'presents the most basic of learning systems, the alphabet, in words that range from ACE to ZERO, yet alongside each it is notable that the gloss lays the emphasis always on another letter [...] Something similar happens for each letter, except N; the system is set up and relished only to be violated. Codification is mocked throughout.'<sup>187</sup> While this is a faithful account of how a modern reader, unaware of the Germanic *fupark* (runic alphabet), may interpret the alphabet (the response of the 'uninitiated'), its effect is different if the reader is aware that Auden is imitating Germanic runic poetry. Three alphabetic poems survive to us, one in Icelandic, one in Norwegian and one in Anglo-Saxon: only in the latter does some of the alliteration match the runic key word.<sup>188</sup> Formally, Auden's alphabet is closest to the Icelandic Runic Poem. Each runic letter corresponds to a talismanic word which the verses of the alphabet poems then describe. This explains why Auden's alphabet poem is laid out in alliterative 'half-lines' of two stresses (as is the convention for Norse skaldic poetry) and not four stresses, and also why the alliterating sound changes in the third half-line (i.e. the start of a new, full 'line').<sup>189</sup> Auden also 'alliterates' vowels with any other vowels, as was common in Germanic poetry (for example, TIME is 'used by the ill'). This is further indication that alphabetic consistency is far from Auden's purpose: the orthography of

<sup>186</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 79.

<sup>187</sup> Crawford, 'Exam Poem', p. 308.

<sup>188</sup> Presumably Auden knew them in *Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples*, ed. and trans. by Bruce Dickinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915). Text also in *The Icelandic Rune Poem*, ed. by R. I. Page (Nottingham: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1999), 1st publ. *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 42 (1998).

<sup>189</sup> In fact NOSE-DIVE only has /n/ alliteration for two of its half-lines; it is completed with /d/, thwarting Crawford's expectation, while HANGAR is logically described with /h/ alliteration in its final half-line. In the Icelandic Rune Poem, unlike the Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem, the majority of the characters are described with 'counter-intuitive' alliteration.

English vowels is so inconsistent that it would be meaningless to attempt to name a vowel with words starting with the same letter-form. A runic symbol appears to present one system of ordering knowledge, a letter-form, but at the same time it represents the secret meaning of a word. The logic of a system of abstract signs which can be read in one of two ways is harder to appreciate than the simple one-to-one correspondence of a truly phonetic alphabet. Runes are magical signifiers of wisdom, but they are obscure and inscrutable to the uninitiated: they are meant to keep certain people out as they are to let others in. Their persistence into the instructional alphabet of the aviation elite is extremely subtle.

Accentual, alliterative verse is found elsewhere in 'Journal of an Airman': notably the populist, satirical song, 'Beethameer, Beethameer, bully of Britain',<sup>190</sup> which the airman intends to use for propaganda purposes, making a memo to himself: '10,000 cyclostyle copies of this for aerial distribution'. Five verses each consist of six lines of four stressed syllables and a seventh-line refrain, always a variation on 'give you the thrashing you richly deserve'. The first six lines of each stanza are heavily marked by alliteration, usually on the first three stressed syllables (a common Anglo-Saxon pattern), the fourth stress taking part not in the head-lettering, but in the song's rhyme royal rhyme-scheme (*ababbcc*). Although predominantly anapaestic in feel (the opening line is untypical in its falling rhythm), Auden actually plays free with the number of unstressed syllables in his song, varying them from one to three between stressed syllables. While the song is not modelled closely on Anglo-Saxon verse, the mediaeval line has clearly influenced its construction, again, combining Germanic and Romance forms, as in the tercets of 'Paid on Both Sides'. Its use to affront publicly an enemy of the state may account for this

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<sup>190</sup> *The English Auden*, pp. 86-7.



mediaeval influence: 'flyting', or the public defamation of an enemy, was a major function of ancient Germanic poetry.<sup>191</sup>

### Making from Fear: the Odes

Book III of *The Orators* consists of six odes, which Mendelson sees as an attempted synthesis of the group and individual perspectives, explored separately in the earlier two books.<sup>192</sup> Saxonisms make something of a comeback in this final book, due, I would argue, to those group emphases. In a manner similar to that of 'Paid', Auden problematizes the reader's reaction to his use of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric in the odes, although here it is with a much greater confidence.

In the first ode *The Dream of the Rood* is again invoked as a visionary device: 'Lo, a dream met me in middle night, I saw in a vision / Life pass as a gull.'<sup>193</sup> In the same poem, the inversion and alliteration of a brilliant evocation of the coming of warm weather, urging people to water, puts one in mind of a similar image from *The Seafarer*:

Came summer like a flood, did never greediest gardener  
Make blossoms flusher:  
Sunday meant lakes for many, a browner body,  
Beauty from burning:<sup>194</sup>

Parallelism like that of *The Wanderer*'s enumeration of the fates of men is also mimicked in the lines:

<sup>191</sup> Although flyting is often considered more typical of Norse and Middle Scots verse than Anglo-Saxon, we feel its presence in the scene with Unferth in *Beowulf*, in Juliana's treatment of the devil, and, most obviously, *The Battle of Maldon*, the whole of which poem is a kind of public shaming of those East Saxons who fled the field and did not die with their lord.

<sup>192</sup> Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p. 94.

<sup>193</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 94. The 'gull' may be yet another manifestation of the seabirds of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.

<sup>194</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 95. Compare lines 48-52 of *The Seafarer*: *Bearwas blostnum nimað, byrig fægriað, / wongas wlitigiað, woruld onetted; / ealle þa gemoniað modes fusne / sefan to siþe, þam þe swa þenced / on flodwegas feor gewitan* ('The groves take on blossom, towns become fair, meadows become beautiful, the world turns on; all these urge the eager of mind and spirit to the journey, he who so longs to

One sniffed at a root to make him dream of a woman,  
 One laid his hands on the heads of dear little pages;  
 Neither in the bed nor on the *arête* was there shown me  
 One with power.<sup>195</sup>

The second ode, dedicated 'to Gabriel Carritt, Captain of Sedbergh School XV, Spring, 1927',<sup>196</sup> memorialises each member of a victorious school rugby team in turn:

Tudor from the tram-lined town,  
 Self-confident under the moor;  
 Scott from the chalk-pitted horse-taming down,  
 And otter-smooth Kerr:  
 Sure-footed MacColl from the life-hostile gabbros of Skye,  
 Red-bush Abrahall, diving Gray,  
 Waters from dykes of the Wash, and Fagge from the bird-singing plain.<sup>197</sup>

Although strophic and based on the Pindaric model in many respects, the ode's function as a praise poem owes something to early Germanic literature. A number of alliterative phrases, both in the naming-list and elsewhere,<sup>198</sup> and a general laconism of syntax underline this debt. The match itself is depicted as a great battle and this ode, celebrating the battlefield valour of a group, can be set in direct contrast with the fifth ode, which supersedes it and encourages schoolboys to be cynical of this kind of manipulative rhetoric. The third ode is also characterised by syntactic brevity and alliteration, but the debt here is to Norse, not Anglo-Saxon: a raft of other sound-patterning devices, typical of intricate, skaldic patterns binds together Auden's stanza-form.

The close reference to *The Battle of Maldon* in the fifth Ode (drawn attention to by the use of single quotation marks) is well documented:<sup>199</sup>

What have we all been doing to have made from Fear

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depart far on flood-ways,'). *The Exeter Book*, p. 144. Memories of Berlin clearly make up much of Auden's ode. Spending sunny Sundays by the city's many lakes is still a popular recreation for Berliners.

<sup>195</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 96.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>198</sup> For example, 'watching weak from hospital ward', 'prancing for prowess, posh in their pride', and 'regents have ranted, and flash-talk in a quarry plotted / To burn down barns, but both were noughted'.

<sup>199</sup> See Fuller, *Commentary*, p. 120, and Crawford, 'Exam Poem', pp. 309-10.

That laconic war-bitten captain addressing them now  
 'Heart and head shall be keener, mood the more  
     As our might lessens':  
 To have caused their shout 'We will fight till we lie down beside  
     The Lord we have loved'?<sup>200</sup>

'Laconic' is a good choice of adjective for Byrhtwold, its stressed syllable alliterating artfully with his (strictly incorrect) designation, 'captain'. Yet *Maldon*'s irrefragable belief in the honour of death on the battlefield is not admired here, but laid open to question. The speaker of the ode (which was dedicated to Auden's school pupils) suggests that inducing an individual to believe in 'the ultimate sacrifice' for the greater good is only possible through the use of 'Fear' as an instrument of persuasion.<sup>201</sup> If *The Orators* is an 'English Study', one might expect to find examples from the earliest literature of the English people being used to validate 'typical' English values or character traits as archetypal, rather as Pound believed he had detected the English national chemical in *The Seafarer*. English resolve, or 'stiff upper-lip', in the face of suicidal odds might be traced to the actions of Byrhtwold and company, whose glorious deaths could be (mis)used to encourage a similar spirit in the nation's youth: one can see how *Maldon* might make a popular story for schoolboys of the Empire. However, Auden is suspicious of such ethnological and ethical generalisations, having grown up in the shadow of the Great War, in which countless lives had been lost by young men following their officers into situations where certain death could be expected, with exactly the same blind commitment which Byrhtwold exhorts the East Saxons to feel for their officer, Byrhtnoth. The fifth ode uses *Maldon* to expose the ways in which this group willingness to die is manufactured and asks its readers (schoolboys) to reject them: 'no surrender' is not this speaker's motto.

<sup>200</sup> *The English Auden*, p.108. Compare lines 312-19 of *Maldon*. *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 15-16.

Bringing *The Orators* to a close is the epilogue, “‘O where are you going?’ said reader to rider”,<sup>202</sup> perhaps the only part of the work to have lived successfully outside it. This powerful and disturbing poem has been well explicated elsewhere, but one possible interpretation has not been considered previously. An obvious major feature of the poem’s structure is its opposition of minimal pairs. That is to say, ‘reader’ is phonetically identical to ‘rider’, with the exception of one phoneme (the vowel), as ‘midden’ is to ‘madden’, ‘fearer’ to ‘farer’, ‘looking’ to ‘lacking’ and ‘horror’ to ‘hearer’. This may be more than just a poet’s game with near-homophones. The modulation of vowels which the poem emphasizes is reminiscent of the patterns of vowel gradation, mutation, ablaut and umlaut which are described in grammars of the history of English and other Germanic languages. Undoubtedly, Auden was expected to know the cause and effects of *i*-mutation and other sound shifts while studying Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in the twenties.<sup>203</sup> Some of the phonetic modulations in Auden’s poem are identical to those which took place historically. For example the sound /f/ often underlies modern English /v/<sup>204</sup> and in Auden’s poem we are told ‘that valley is fatal’. Another, more general, phenomenon is the diphthongization of primitive Anglo-Saxon front vowels under certain circumstances, and ‘reader to rider’ does shift the long, front vowel /i:/ to the diphthong /aI/ (although the correspondence between these two specific vowels is not one found in English phonology).<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup> In 1931, the tyranny of educational institutions may have been in Auden’s mind more than the tyranny of political institutions. *The Orators* proved to be prophetic in its theme of blind obedience to absolute leadership, rather than politically satirical of its own moment.

<sup>202</sup> *The English Auden*, p. 110.

<sup>203</sup> Several questions set in Auden’s final examination papers deal with exactly such matters: paper 1, question 9, paper 3, question 5 and paper 5(b), question 8.

<sup>204</sup> A-S. *fet*, (‘cup’ or ‘vessel’) becomes modern English ‘vat’.

<sup>205</sup> See Henry Wyld, *The Historical Study of the Mother Tongue* (London: John Murray, 1906), p. 230.

I am not suggesting that Auden is reproducing the phonological changes set out in his undergraduate grammars: his exam performance indicates that he may not have taken time to master them. Part of the point is the lack of exact correspondence; that the modulations of this epilogue look as if they might be obeying the rules of sound shifts, but are in fact wrong. Like the non-sequiturs of the Airman's Alphabet, this is another example of a system of knowledge being parodied; part of the pattern, identified by Crawford, of the display of apparent tools of explication or education, which turn out to be useless. Even the question posed in the first line ('where are you going?') can be read as the inquiry of one personified vowel to another; a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the rationale of the early Germanic sound-shifts (which can sound quite ridiculous when first presented to beginners, as if speakers who favoured a slightly different pronunciation suddenly decided to sunder themselves irrevocably from their companions somewhere in the depths of the primeval Teutonic *Wald*). Oxford Dons might understand the phonetic metamorphoses of English more fully than Auden, but (asks this poem) can they make creative use of that knowledge ('as he left them there, as he left them there')? In the revenge of Auden's first mature work, his examiners remain mere readers and fearers, while he becomes the active rider and farer.<sup>206</sup>

With the exception of the parallels in textual instability, and the possible phonological parody of 'O where are you going?', the use of Anglo-Saxon in *The Orators* is essentially not very different in technique from that of 'Paid on Both Sides' and *Poems*. What is new is the increasing identification of Saxonist rhetoric with public and communal utterances. The propriety of this development is obvious, for much of the surviving corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry indicates a socially-cohesive, communal function, lost to modern poetry.

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<sup>206</sup> This argument must be qualified by the fact that Auden maintained warm relationships with two of his

However, Auden is uneasy about the moral responsibility of using powerful rhetoric with such clear designs on its public. Almost as much as he is attracted by them, Auden mistrusts the ethical values expressed by the rhetorical gestures of *The Battle of Maldon*, or *The Exeter Book* wisdom-poems. This contradiction is entirely in keeping with his general feelings of ambivalence about *The Orators*, expressed in his preface to the new edition in 1966:

My name on the title-page seems a pseudonym for someone else, someone talented but near the border of sanity, who might well, in a year or two, become a Nazi.<sup>207</sup>

These misgivings about poetry with public ambition and the use of a Saxonised style are resolved in *The Age of Anxiety*, a poem written in a line derived from Anglo-Saxon metre and concerned with the kind of heroism which a 'just war' (the Second World War) makes necessary.

#### *The Age of Anxiety: Auden's Mature Assimilation of Anglo-Saxon*

Like many of Auden's earlier works, at one level *The Age of Anxiety* is an allegory of the working of consciousness from a Jungian perspective.<sup>208</sup> 'Paid on Both Sides' made an unlikely union of internal psychological conflict and the internecine tribal conflicts dramatized in early Germanic heroic literature. More than fifteen years later, Auden found himself, like civilians everywhere, drawn into a global conflict by tribal allegiances unasked for: at least one of the combatants (Germany) was conducting the war as if it were an ancient blood-feud. Faced with the reality of the Second World War, Auden's will to poetry responded with a similar reflex as when contemplating the imaginary struggle between the Nowers and Shaws: it fell back on the resource of Anglo-Saxon.

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Oxford teachers, Neville Coghill and J. R. R. Tolkien, throughout his life.

<sup>207</sup> Quoted in Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p. 96.

<sup>208</sup> Auden, *Collected Poems*, pp. 447-536.



Malin, Rosetta, Quant, and Emble may represent the four Jungian archetypal faculties,<sup>209</sup> but they are also characters in a work containing some of the greatest war poetry in English, comparable to *Beowulf* in its concern with the fate of both combatants and civilians caught up in tribal violence.

If the themes of tribal and psychological conflict find a structural rhyme with Anglo-Saxon poetry in the composition of both 'Paid' and *The Age of Anxiety*, the deployment differs radically. The direct but recondite allusions to specific Anglo-Saxon poems, an essential part of the fabric of 'Paid', are largely absent from *The Age of Anxiety*. *The Orators* had taught Auden much about the use of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric in constructing a public persona. Writing about oratory, and the public deception it can be made to serve, Auden also mastered the tricks of oratory, and had the opportunity to reflect on how to use those tricks with a sense of public responsibility. Paradoxically, Auden's most obscure work, ill-understood even by its author, enabled his public voice to come to maturation: after *The Orators*, the exclusion of the reader by a clever, but private, knowing allusiveness is permanently left behind. What remains is a line clearly indebted to Anglo-Saxon metre. Although not accurate in every prosodic detail, the rhythmical base which underpins the whole of *The Age of Anxiety* gives a convincing impression of the cadences of Anglo-Saxon poetry in a contemporary English idiom. Until the end of part two (there are six parts, unequal in length), this Saxonist line dominates; during and after part three Auden performs a number of variations. This chapter will close with analysis of the first part of *The Age of Anxiety*, 'Prologue', which includes the poem's most direct treatment of the War.

<sup>209</sup> Thought, Feeling, Intuition and Sensation. See Edward Mendelson, *Later Auden* (London: Faber, 1999),

*Anxiety* opens with the four characters silently brooding in a bar, when a radio news flash breaks into their internal monologues. Like several sections of *The Orators*, this broadcast is an 'official doctored message'.<sup>210</sup>

Now the news. Night raids on  
Five cities. Fires started.  
Pressure applied by pincer movement  
In threatening thrust. Third Division  
Enlarges beachhead. Lucky charm  
Saves sniper. Sabotage hinted  
In steel-mill stoppage. Strong point held  
By fanatical Nazis. Canal crossed  
By heroic marines. Rochester barber  
Fools foe. Finns ignore  
Peace feeler. Pope condemns  
Axis excesses. Underground  
Blows up bridge. Thibetan prayer-wheels  
Revolve for victory. Vital crossroads  
Taken by tanks. Trend to the left  
Forecast by Congressman. Cruiser sunk  
In Valdivian Deep. Doomed sailors  
Play poker. Reporter killed.

With the by-now-familiar elision of many articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions and the copula, this passage is as tersely telegraphic as the opening of 'Paid', but here the analogy between ancient metre and modern communications technology is explicit. References to the recent allied landings in Normandy (Auden began work on *The Age of Anxiety* in the month after D-Day), the costly assaults on the Dutch waterways, and the diplomatic machinations of war-torn Europe are as topical (and as partisan) as were the events described in *Maldon* and the commemorative poems of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to their contemporary audience; the wireless bulletin is a twentieth-century *Chronicle*.

Not only is the occasion for this Saxonist measure apposite (war was a traditional subject in Anglo-Saxon verse),<sup>211</sup> all the most important characteristics of Anglo-Saxon verse

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p. 247.

<sup>210</sup> Auden, *Collected Poems*, pp. 454-5.

structure are approximated with enough attention to detail to be convincing. Four strong stresses are divided by an unambiguous mid-line caesura, while the total number of syllables varies (from five to ten). Falling rhythms (i.e. A-type half-lines) predominate; so much so that the overall effect actually becomes unlike Anglo-Saxon poetry in its rhythmic monotony. Alliteration is functional, not decorative, marking every third stress, and either the first, or second, or both first and second stressed syllables, but never the fourth, according to standard *scop*-ish practice. All vowels are allowed to 'alliterate', as the line 'Axis excesses. Underground' bears witness. As Auden rightly alliterates on accented syllables (an aural property), not on the first character of a word (an orthographic property), words like 'applied' and 'enlarges' participate in the sound-patterning of their line, for their unstressed, first syllables are irrelevant. Therefore the following lines (with stressed syllables marked in bold) are quite regular:

*By fanatical Nazis. Canal crossed*  
*By heroic marines. Rochester barber*

These lines also illustrate how Auden frequently starts a new sentence (and/or subject) with the *b*-verse, rather than at the start of the line, again in accord with typical Anglo-Saxon practice (especially in the *Maxims* poems). This overlapping of two structures, the syntactic period and the alliterative pattern, creates the kind of sophisticated flexibility that *enjambment* provides in conventional prosodic models. Auden develops the technique by frequently beginning a speech or internal monologue after the caesura (i.e. on the *b*-verse). This mid-line change of speaker creates an impression of the characters inter-cutting each other in conversation, while the alliterative bind preserves a sense of

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<sup>211</sup> One could argue that a work which records the defeat of the forces of pan-Germanicism in a line based on ancient Teutonic heroic poetry is a kind of poetic retribution. The supporters of Aryan supremacy are denied the very cultural touchstones which they wish to appropriate for their own mis-use.

unity and continuity (allegorically, the characters are parts of the same mental whole).

This is particularly apparent in part two, 'The Seven Ages'.<sup>212</sup>

If the radio war-report shows *The Age of Anxiety*'s Saxonist line at its most elliptical, the characters' thoughts and speeches demonstrate how the same measure can be expanded, with the addition of extra unstressed syllables, to accommodate a more ruminative tone. Malin, an intelligence officer in the Canadian Air Force, relives an air raid he participated in, over occupied Europe. Although fought with modern war machines, the narrative of ambush and counter-ambush and the sense of tragic inevitability find direct analogues in material like the Icelandic sagas and the *Beowulf*-poet's account of the raid at Finnsburh:

Untalkative and tense, we took off  
 Anxious into air; our instruments glowed,  
 Dials in darkness, for dawn was not yet;  
 Pulses pounded; we approached our target,  
 Conscious in common of our closed Here  
 And of Them out There, thinking of Us  
 In a different dream, for we die in theirs  
 Who kill in ours and become fathers,  
 Not twisting tracks their trigger hands are  
 Given goals by; we began our run;  
 Death and damage darted at our will,  
 Bullets were about, blazing anger  
 Lunged from below, but we laid our eggs  
 Neatly in their nest, a nice deposit,  
 Hatched in an instant; houses flamed in  
 Shuddering sheets as we shed our big  
 Tears on their town: we turned to come back,  
 But at high altitudes, hostile brains  
 Waited in the west, a wily flock  
 Vowed to vengeance in the vast morning,  
 -A mild morning where no marriage was,  
 And gravity a god greater than love -  
 Fierce interferers. We fought them off  
 But paid a price; there was pain for some.  
 "Why have They killed me?" wondered our Bert, our  
 Greenhouse gunner, forgot our answer,  
 Then was not with us. We watched others

<sup>212</sup> See for example the end of Rosetta's first speech in this section, 'incited by / Our shortened shadows,' and the start of Malin's 'With shaving comes / An hour when he halts.' Ibid., p. 467.

Drop into death; dully we mourned each  
 Flare as it fell with a friend's lifetime,  
 While we hurried on to our home bases  
 To the safe smells and a sacrament  
 Of tea with toast. At twenty to eight I  
 Stepped onto grass, still with the living,  
 While far and near a fioritura  
 Of brooks and blackbirds bravely struck the  
 International note with no sense  
 Of historic truth, of time meaning  
 Once and for all, and my watch stuttered:-  
 Many have perished; more will.<sup>213</sup>

The texture of a passage such as this is more thoroughly Anglo-Saxon than any of Auden's earlier work, despite being almost bereft of references to any specific Anglo-Saxon poem. Several lessons have been learnt from that early work. The airman as twentieth-century, heroic warrior was first advanced in *The Orators*. Here, enthusiasm for this figure is tempered by the fact that the duty of these airmen is to kill civilians. It is also possible that the detail of the line 'Bullets were about, blazing anger' may be a remnant from the account in 'Paid' of Red Shaw's death by 'greatest gun-anger', itself a faint echo from *Beowulf*: recognition of this makes little difference to an appreciation of the passage. Furthermore, death before dawn may remind the scholar that for the Anglo-Saxons the *morgenceald* seems to have held a particular fear, and it is the first light of dawn that reveals the horror of Grendel's attacks to the Danes. Again, it is entirely unnecessary for the reader to know this: in any case the detail possesses historical as well as fictional accuracy, for the RAF regularly carried out the night bombing raids over Germany, leaving the daylight skies to the USAF.<sup>214</sup> It is also true that the understated restraint of 'there was pain for some' and Bert's rather phlegmatically practical dying question partake of the Anglo-Saxon *scop*'s taste for litotes, but it is also an expression of the stiff-upper-lip mentality by virtue of which the forces of the British Empire were able

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., pp. 455-6.

<sup>214</sup> See A. W. Purdue, *The Second World War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 142.

to endure the War. That the very different final lines of Malin's monologue are so unlike Anglo-Saxon in all respects apart from their prosodic structure demonstrates the triumph of Auden's experiments: the appropriation here is total.

Generally, the marriage of metre and matter is so effective that one could argue the verse is more thoroughly Saxonised than any other poem in a more or less contemporary idiom. Even in the moments where Pound's Saxonised verse is at its most assimilated in *The Cantos*, he still relies on the occasional archaism or non-standard spelling, as a signal to his reader. Lexically, however, there is nothing in the above passage which would indicate that something ancient underlies this poetry. If the verse at first seems strange (its syntax and prosody being unfamiliar), this suits the fact that war is strange, particularly the killing of people one cannot see, thousands of feet below; a strangeness that clearly pre-occupies Malin. Poetry dealing with such a subject is bound to have a defamiliarizing effect. Saxonised syntax is here used as the syntax of a troubled, yet detached, moral conscience. This further emphasizes that Auden (who is the only poet under study to have shown an interest in the more didactic poems of the Anglo-Saxon canon), is uniquely interested in the moral dilemmas which lie at the heart of much Anglo-Saxon heroic verse. In extreme conditions, how should one carry out one's responsibility to self and group? At what cost should obligations of honour and loyalty be met? The questions are posed, with a clear answer in mind, by the *Maldon* poet; more ambiguously by the *Beowulf*-poet and with a troubled conscience by Auden (who once asked 'Which Side Am I Supposed to be On?').<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> 'Which Side am I Supposed to be On?' has been used as a title for the fifth Ode of *The Orators* (the ode which questions *Maldon*'s values). It has also been called 'Ode'.



alarming growths of  
Moulds and monsters on memories stuffed  
With dead men's doodles, dossiers written  
In lost lingos',<sup>216</sup>

<sup>216</sup> Auden, *Collected Poems*, p. 461.

<sup>217</sup> Quant imagines the world-wide participants in ground combat. Rosetta imagines an idealised picture of the British Home Front and compares it with life in the occupied countries and a council of the Allied heads of state. Emble, who has enlisted in the Navy, recalls a submarine attack on his convoy. His monologue

'favourite', *Deor*: *þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg*.<sup>218</sup> *Deor*, with enjoyable irony, has not passed away, although it certainly came close, and many of the things it commemorates have endured only through its verses. Auden's inclusion of it in his poem further thwarts its self-declared transience. More than that, it puts Bert and the others who have perished into a vast framework of loss, remembrance and forgetfulness. Seen against the refrain of *Deor*, Auden's 'more will' perish, refers not only to the lives still to be lost before the end of the War, but also to those who will perish in future conflicts centuries from now, possibly when interest in *The Age of Anxiety* has become as specialist as it presently is in *Deor*.<sup>219</sup>

Suitable for more than war poetry, the flexibility of the form is apparent throughout the rest of the work. Moving from the tragic to the trivial, the wireless interrupts the characters again to deliver a jaunty advertising jingle which exhibits the same basic structure as Malin's speech above, although in this guise, 'matter and manner set their teeth on edge'.<sup>220</sup> In part two, 'The Seven Ages', the speakers elaborate at great length on Shakespeare's theme of the seven ages of man, reminding us that this is not only an allegorical narrative poem, but a dramatic poem: Auden is reasserting his right over a number of non-lyrical modes mostly given up by twentieth-century English poetry. Using an historical form almost lost to English poetry is an essential part of this agenda. For the same reasons, Auden recycles the Anglo-Saxon line through a number of stanza

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is notable here for its allusion to the Anglo-Saxon kenning for the sea as the 'whale's home': 'below our songs / Were deaf deeps, denes of unaffection, / chimes where only / The whale is warm'. The 'tireless gulls' who 'Wove over water webs of brightness / And sad sound' and the 'Limited laughter' of the ocean-bound sailors may also echo the seabirds of *The Wanderer*, whose laughter is small consolation for the isolated speaker of that poem. Auden, *Collected Poems*, p. 457.

<sup>218</sup> 'That passed away, so may this', lines 6, 13, 17, 20, 27 & 42 of *Deor*. *The Exeter Book*, pp. 178-9.

From the early nineteenth century, *Deor* consistently received special attention in anthologies and critical accounts of Anglo-Saxon literature for being the only example of a poem with a refrain.

<sup>219</sup> *Deor*'s refrain consoles, while Auden's discomforts.

<sup>220</sup> Auden, *Collected Poems*, p. 462.

forms during the rest of the work. Space does not permit a full analysis of these, but we find skaldic half-lines, Percy-esque ballads, popular songs, blank verse paragraphs, tercets, quatrains and many others. It is as if Auden wishes to demonstrate the resourcefulness of the basic metre by taking it through a tour of historical forms. That he should have completed such a versatile long work, simultaneously so faithful to the concerns of its own eventful times, and to all times, scarcely a year after the war's conclusion is testament to Auden's great skill, commitment and topicality, but also to the possibilities offered by incorporating Saxonised forms into modern English. Techniques learnt at Oxford, from poets a thousand years away, had unchained Auden's Daimon.

## Pulling the Voice into the Ring of the Dance

It has been demonstrated in the previous chapters that Anglo-Saxon is part of the live tradition of English poetry and that several important poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have drunk from wells of English deeper than Chaucer's. Ideas about etymology, Anglo-Saxon diction and word-formation are fundamental to much of Hopkins's practice, and in the latter case, have a 'knock-on' effect on his 'sprung rhythm'. Pound creates a personal Saxonist mode in 'The Seafarer', which he associates with exile, symbolic journeying, the loss of companions and metamorphosis. He deploys this mode throughout *The Cantos* and finds something like the talismanic power of the ideogram in the Anglo-Saxon kenning. Eventually, Auden assimilates the metrical and rhetorical effects of Anglo-Saxon verse and creates a hybrid style from Anglo-Saxon and other mainstream English traditions. This style does not rely on archaism or specific reference to Anglo-Saxon poems and is applied to twentieth-century subject matter with no sense of anachronism or nostalgia.

Why 'modernist' poets<sup>1</sup> should be interested in Anglo-Saxon is less straightforward, although we have seen many poets and philologists argue that the Germanic elements of modern English are more powerful, more direct and more poetic than Latinate or Greek elements.<sup>2</sup> Wide-ranging cultural generalizations are always difficult to make, but I wish to put forward one hypothesis before considering the future of Anglo-Saxon in modern

<sup>1</sup> Treating Hopkins as a proto-modernist, Pound as a high modernist, and Auden as a late modernist.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Upward, whose thinking was very influential on Pound, can be added to those previously mentioned. He wrote that 'as soon as the English get away from colleges in some wild land that Caesar never knew their own words bubble up like a natural spring, and the Aryan root is found budding and blossoming again'. Allen Upward, *The New Word*, 2nd edn (London: Fitfield, 1908), pp. 39-40. Also: 'the true folk words come to us as the wrappings of our earliest thoughts and feelings, and form, as it were, the mind's natural skin'. He argues that 'the work of the Idealist will have to begin here [and] put an end for ever to that miserable gabble' of Latin patter in grammar schools (pp. 48-9).

poetry. The introduction of Saxonist modes of writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be seen as part of the general, widespread interest in 'the primitive' and the ideal of the noble savage. As Gauguin idealised the seemingly Edenic society of the South Seas' aborigines; as the pioneers of jazz interpreted Afro-Caribbean rhythms and blues intervals with western instrumentation; as Picasso assimilated African masks into his art; as Eliot incorporated the grail legends and ancient Sanskrit into *The Waste Land*: so Pound and Auden appropriate the earliest, most 'primitive' of English poetry for their own use. Hopkins does not belong in this atavistic frame: he is too committed to Victorian values of civilization, but Marsh and other writers in the nineteenth century were informing Hopkins and his contemporaries that a highly ordered and worthwhile culture did exist in early Germanic societies.<sup>3</sup> Hopkins could permit himself an interest in the Anglo-Saxon language, because the nobility of its speakers, rather than their savagery, was emphasized in his own time. Within twenty years or so of Hopkins's death, a feeling common to Western artists is that Rome and Athens (or the Renaissance and Victorian ideas of Rome and Athens), traditionally the twin founts of European high culture, are, on their own, no longer adequate to nourish a modern artistic culture.<sup>4</sup> Exotic or savage, rude and untutored voices from colonies and provinces beyond the borders of Western Classical Art seem to have more pertinence to the *fin de siècle*. What is different about Anglo-Saxon from other forms of primitivism, is that

<sup>3</sup> See Sharon Turner on Anglo-Saxon: 'This language has been thought to be a very rude and barren tongue, incapable of expressing any thing but the most simple and barbarous ideas. The truth, however, is that it is a very copious language, and is capable of expressing any subject of human thought [...] books of history, belles lettres, and poetry, may be now written in it, with considerable precision and correctness, and even with much discrimination, and some elegance of expression.' Sharon Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1799-1805), IV, 511. As late as 1927 this idea was still being expressed: 'if the Germanic invaders of Britain were in many respects savages, they were also noble savages, and in their character lay the seeds of much that was worthy and admirable'. Henry Wyld, *A Short History of English*, 3rd edn (London: John Murray, 1914, 1927), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Modernist interest in Homer does not negate this generalisation. Homer was beginning to be read as oral literature, the product of an unlettered and near-primitive culture, the expression of Ur-Greek civilization, not its full, Athenian flower.

Anglo-Saxon represents both the exotic 'other', and 'our own' cultural capital.<sup>5</sup>

Historically it is the linguistic and literary origin of the English tradition, but the passage of time has made it seem alien. If other primitivist art argues that we need to widen classicist perspectives, Saxonist poetry can also claim to resurrect a pre-classicist perspective, once part of the English tradition. It is simultaneously a form of literary orientalism and literary nationalism.

In the chapters on Hopkins and Pound, it was argued that reactivating Anglo-Saxon roots, and forming new words through compounds, was a strategy to name things more precisely, part of a poetic that attempts to create a more motivational language. It could be called an anti-Saussurean poetic, if that phrase did not imply an historical reaction against a theory that had yet to dominate linguistics.<sup>6</sup> It does share something of the purpose of the earliest philologists, who were attempting to find the original, pre-Babel language, the names of which had been given by Adam and, far from being arbitrary, were God-inspired.<sup>7</sup> Etymologizing English words back to the meanings of their original roots is an attempt to recover a pristine, 'original' English. For Hopkins this is almost an act of Christian devotion. For Pound, whose god and gods are pagan, this devotional aspect is also present, although it is the words themselves which are sacred.

<sup>5</sup> As in Sharon Turner's comparison between the poetry of 'our ancestors' and that of the Maori tribes. See footnote 24 in Chapter One.

<sup>6</sup> After explaining his understanding of the non-arbitrary, concrete nature of Chinese ideograms, Pound remarks that 'Fenollosa was telling how and why a language written in this way simply HAD TO STAY POETIC'. English will not stay poetic in this way, but needs the intervention of writers to keep it so. *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber, 1951), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> See Hans Frede Nielsen, *The Continental Backgrounds of English and its Insular Development until 1154* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1998), pp. 19-20.



Unlike Hopkins and Pound, Auden does not necessarily feel that the earliest meanings of words are the best meanings,<sup>8</sup> but he does share a more general view that English is in a state of decay. It may be a mistaken belief that languages atrophy and stagnate, but it is natural for writers, struggling to write in the shadow of past literary achievement, to imagine that the literary medium is somehow more difficult to work in than it used to be. In the second and third chapters we saw how George Marsh felt that recovery and re-incorporation of Anglo-Saxon elements into modern English was responsible for arresting the linguistic enervation of the eighteenth century. The idea that the health of a language and the health of its society are mutually dependent is also often expressed during this period (the tale of the tribe cannot be told until the dialect of the tribe is purified). In 1845 Carlyle had criticized the ruling classes (whose linguistic register typically included a high proportion of Latinate vocabulary) for their debilitated speech, which he sees as a reflection of their moral failure:

We have Upper, speaking Classes, who do indeed "speak" as never man spake before; the withered flimsiness, godless baseness and barrenness of whose Speech might of itself indicate what kind of Doing and practical Governing went on under it!<sup>9</sup>

In his next paragraph, Carlyle regretfully notes that throughout history violence has often been necessary for the oppressed to free themselves of unjust masters. His rebellion is also a linguistic uprising: ' "*Eu Sachseen, nimith euer saches*, You Saxons, out with your gully-knives then!"' In the same year, Charles Knight wrote that 'dilutions and platitudes' had weakened written English and that 'the noble language – "the tongue that

<sup>8</sup> Auden does quote from A. N. Whitehead, at the start of his essay 'Writing', that 'the art of literature, vocal or written, is to adjust the language so that it embodies what it indicates'. This also suggests a non-Saussurean conception of the sign, in sympathy with that of Hopkins and Pound. Auden, 'Writing', in *The Dyer's Hand and other essays* (London: Faber, 1963), pp. 13-27 (p. 13).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ed. by A. M. D. Hughes (Oxford: Clarendon, 1918), p. 189.

Shakespeare spake" – which is our inheritance, may be saved from corruption by the study of its great Anglo-Saxon elements'.<sup>10</sup>

Hopkins certainly shares this common view that English (like England) is in some state of degeneracy. In a letter to Bridges of 7 September 1888, he complains 'Victorian English is a bad business' and goes on to give several examples of the redundancies and pomposity he despises in contemporary usage.<sup>11</sup> Pound frequently expresses the view that English needs rescuing from nineteenth-century injuries: it is 'blurry, messy'; 'the crust of dead English' of the Victorians 'obfuscated' Pound's development as a writer; 'good writers are those who keep the language efficient'.<sup>12</sup> In conversation with Alan Ansen in February 1947, Auden claimed: 'around Lydgate's time the language started to decay'.<sup>13</sup> He also worried that 'in modern societies where language is continually being debased and reduced to nonspeech, the poet is in constant danger of having his ear corrupted'.<sup>14</sup> One way to reinvigorate a language blunted by a later age, is to return to its roots, when it was vigorous and youthful. Pound's Anglo-Saxon mode is used for the aviators of 'Canto XXVIII' precisely because it is in opposition to the debased and debasing journalistic English which will otherwise be the only record of their adventures. Mediaeval English pre-dates the corrupting influence of modern media.<sup>15</sup> Linguistically, this argument is quite unconvincing, but it can bear poetic fruit.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Knight, *Old England: A Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Baronial, Municipal and Popular Antiquities*, 2 vols (London: the author, 1845), II, 79-80.

<sup>11</sup> *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. by Claude Collier Abbot, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 284.

<sup>12</sup> Pound, 'A Retrospect', in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), pp. 3-14 (p. 11); 'Cavalcanti', in *Literary Essays*, pp. 149-200 (p. 193); *ABC of Reading*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Ansen, *The Table Talk of W. H. Auden*, ed. by Nicholas Jenkins (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1990), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Auden, 'Writing', in *Dyer's Hand*, pp. 13-27 (p. 23).

<sup>15</sup> Criticism of journalese is common in Modernism. Gerald Crich and Rupert Birkin complain of 'newspaper cant' in chapter five of D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), p. 55. Pound attributes the decline of Greek civilization to journalistic debasement of language: 'Greece rotted. [...] Language had already got down to *Times* leader and *D. Telegraph* level'. The criticism is also

This Modernist nostalgia for the past, for the ideals of heroic savages, or a return to more hierarchical and traditional social structures, is often identified by critics as right-wing and reactionary, and for that reason Auden is rarely placed in this cultural context. If we attach less importance to the simplicities of political vocabulary (left-wing vs. right-wing), and pay more attention to the politics of cultural capital, and the ways it may be invested, the gulf between a Pound and an Auden will not seem so wide. In Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*, Emble also fears that civilization is in mortal danger. While 'near-sighted scholars on canal paths / defined their terms':

out of the north, from  
 Black tundras, from basalt and lichen,  
 Peripheral people, rancid ones  
 Stocky on horses, stomachs in need of  
 Game and grazing, by grass corridors  
 Coursed down on their concatenation  
 Of smiling cities. Swords and arrows  
 Accosted their calm; their climate knew  
 Fire and fear; they fell, they bled, not an  
 Eye was left open; all disappeared:  
 Utter oblivion they had after that.<sup>16</sup>

Here we see the savages of the margins overcoming the complacent urban centres.

Auden's solution in *Anxiety* is slightly more complex, for while he does appropriate the vigour of primitive heroic literature (Malin must cause 'death and damage' to the 'fierce interferers' who threaten the existence of his culture), he also interrogates that primitivism. In Auden's hands Anglo-Saxon is an instructional tool more than a corrective tool, but like Pound's, his aim is to 'save civilization'.<sup>17</sup> For all three poets, a form of English thought to be at the margins of poetic tradition has revitalized its centre.

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directed at 1930s Britain of course. *Guide to Kulchur* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938), p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. by Edward Mendelson, 2nd edn (London: Faber, 1991), pp. 459-60.

<sup>17</sup> The quotation marks allude to the title of Lucy McDiarmid's book, in which she makes similar connections between Auden and Yeats and Eliot (not with reference to using Anglo-Saxon). Lucy

Hopkins, Pound and Auden have variously exerted great influence over subsequent poets, so that through their assimilation of its techniques, Anglo-Saxon has coursed into the lifeblood of modern English poetry. Perhaps only Yeats and Eliot have had comparable influence on British poets after the Second World War, but their education had not provided them with the skills necessary to make use of Anglo-Saxon.<sup>18</sup> Largely as a result of the work of Hopkins, Pound and Auden, the availability of the earliest English poetry as a contemporary resource is widely apparent.<sup>19</sup> In the introduction to his recent translation of *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney claims that an unconscious Anglo-Saxon trace was left on his earliest work, through his affinity with Hopkins, whom Heaney calls 'a chip off the Old English block'.<sup>20</sup> Pound's development of the accentual Anglo-Saxon line can be heard in the free verse of many subsequent poets. Basil Bunting also owes much to Pound's experiments, using the varied rhythms of his accentual line with clashing stresses to great effect in 'Briggflatts', particularly in those passages which deal with Northern material.<sup>21</sup> Thom Gunn's comment about its presence in Donald Hall's poetry suggests that Gunn himself has found it useful.<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Hill, a poet who shares both a ludic quality and a sense of moral responsibility with Auden, seems to have inherited his restrained use of Anglo-Saxon prosody. Much of the 'prose' of *Mercian*

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McDiarmid, *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot and Auden Between the Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Although, as stated in the introduction, Eliot's use of a mediaeval, alliterative line in *Murder in the Cathedral* and *Four Quartets* ranges him alongside the poets of this study. Yeats's interest in early Irish poetry aligns him with some of the arguments advanced about literary primitivism, although his was not a linguistic primitivism.

<sup>19</sup> Briefly traced, not in chronological order of influenced poets, but of the three influencing poets.

<sup>20</sup> Seamus Heaney, trans., *Beowulf* (London: Faber, 1999), p. xxiii. As argued in chapter two, the exact sense in which Hopkins is 'a chip off the Old English block' needs careful qualification.

<sup>21</sup> Bunting's general debt to Pound is well-known. The importance he attached to both the Anglo-Saxon rhythmical form and Pound's impression of it, is documented in his lectures on English poetry. See *Basil Bunting on Poetry*, ed. by Peter Makin (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 29-30 & 123.

<sup>22</sup> Writing of a poem by Donald Hall, Gunn remarks that 'it is written in a line based on the Old English accentual line as it was loosened and revised by Pound, one of the most useful and flexible technical

*Hymns* has been type-set to conceal a movement which is essentially Saxonist (a device also learnt from early Auden).<sup>23</sup> Other poets make their own contact with Anglo-Saxon, such as Edwin Morgan and Denise Levertov.<sup>24</sup> All of these figures are now quite senior (or in the case of Levertov, dead), and it may be that the phenomenon of bringing Anglo-Saxon elements back into the mainstream of tradition has come to an end: few younger poets have drawn directly on Anglo-Saxon.<sup>25</sup> This does not imply the failure of any supposed Saxonist 'programme'. It simply indicates that one cycle of renewal in the tradition may be coming to a close. What was needed from Anglo-Saxon has been successfully appropriated, so that techniques, rhythms, diction and rhetoric suggested by Anglo-Saxon poetry can now be found in the work of Hopkins, Pound, Auden and the generation that followed them. There is no longer the imperative to make direct contact with the source. Cædmon, the rude, unlettered cow-herd, had once remained outside the entertainment hall, excluded from the singing within. He moves from the dark margins of his community to the bright centre, where his inspired poetry commands attention and attracts imitators, pulling the voice into the ring of the dance:

All others talked as if  
talk were a dance.

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innovations of the century'. Thom Gunn, 'Living in the Present: Donald Hall', in *Shelf Life: Essays, Memoirs and an Interview* (London: Faber, 1994), pp. 96-101 (p. 98).

<sup>23</sup> E.g. 'The princes of Mercia were badger and raven. / Thrall to their freedom, I dug and hoarded. / Orchards fruited above clefts. / I drank from honeycombs of chill sandstone.' First paragraph of poem VI of *Mercian Hymns*, my line-breaks added to reveal four main stresses to each sentence, with a strong mid-line pauses in all but the third line. *Mercian Hymns* first published in 1971 by André Deutsch, reprinted in Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 103-34 (p. 110). *Mercian Hymns* is the title Sweet gives to an Anglian interlinear gloss to the Psalms in Cotton MS. Vespasian A 1. Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 7th edn, pp. 177-88.

<sup>24</sup> For Morgan, Pound was an example to react against, rather than follow: 'regarding Pound's "Seafarer", I suppose the fact that I had studied Anglo-Saxon and knew and admired the original poem made it hard for me to share the huge enthusiasm felt by so many of the critics'. From a letter to the present author, 2 May 1997. Morgan's first collection, *Dies Irae* (1952), includes translations of several Anglo-Saxon poems, and original work influenced by Anglo-Saxon (notably the title-poem). Edwin Morgan, *Collected Poems 1949-1987* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990), pp. 21-40. In the same year he published a good verse translation of *Beowulf* (with an interesting introduction), which demonstrates his commitment to Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, trans. by Edwin Morgan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952). Levertov's poem 'Cædmon' draws directly on Bede's account. Denise Levertov, *Breathing the Water* (New York: New Directions, 1987), p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> This may be due to the fact that fewer young poets now study the subject at university.

Clodhopper I, with clumsy feet  
would break the gliding ring.  
Early I learned to  
hunch myself  
close by the door:  
then when the talk began  
I'd wipe my  
mouth and wend  
unnoticed back to the barn  
to be with the warm beasts,  
dumb among body sounds  
of the simple ones.  
I'd see by a twist  
of lit rush the motes  
of gold moving  
from shadow to shadow  
slow in the wake  
of deep untroubled sighs.  
The cows  
munched or stirred or were still. I  
was at home and lonely,  
both in good measure. Until  
the sudden angel affrighted me – light effacing  
my feeble beam,  
a forest of torches, feathers of flame, sparks upflying:  
but the cows as before  
were calm, and nothing was burning,  
          nothing but I, as that hand of fire  
touched my lip and scorched my tongue  
and pulled my voice  
          into the ring of the dance.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Levertov, 'Caedmon', in *Breathing the Water*, p. 65.



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## Chronological Table of Publications, Scholarship and Poetry

The following appendix attempts to map the rise in interest in Anglo-Saxon literature and language as expressed by scholarship and publications, and to plot that information against the work of poets who have made use of it. The chronological tabulation of this information is intended to be of use in illustrating what editions of, and knowledge about Anglo-Saxon texts may have been available to any poet at any given time.

This appendix does not pretend to be exhaustive. A full treatment of the rise of the discipline of Anglo-Saxon studies requires a separate research project. For the same reason, not all the information has been acquired from primary sources: for example, several secondary sources cite 1655 as the publication date for the Junius and Marshall edition of 'The Junius Manuscript', but I have not confirmed this with access to an original copy. A more complete study of the subject might be developed from the material in this appendix.

The first column does not consist entirely of Anglo-Saxon scholarly publications and editions. Prose translations of poems are included here, as are treatises on rhythm which deal with Anglo-Saxon and relevant philological and linguistic works. The second column includes births, deaths, appointments and movements of antiquarians, scholars and teachers. For the main part, the third column includes information about poets and poetic texts. Many more novels and plays which deal with Anglo-Saxon themes could have been added, but the focus would have been too diffuse. Scragg's introductory essay to *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons* is the best place to get a more complete

picture of the historical plays and novels with Anglo-Saxon subjects which were in vogue in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

DATE	A-S PUBLICATIONS/TEXTS	A-S SCHOLARS	POETRY/POETS
c.1071	Bishop Leofric gives <i>The Exeter Book</i> to Exeter cathedral library.		
Late C12/ Early C13			Layamon writes his <i>Brut</i> in archaic English and (more or less) alliterative verse.
Late C13/ Early C14			Robert of Gloucester chooses English for his metrical chronicle of England.
c.1390			Chaucer's <i>Man of Law's Tale</i> refers to King Ælle and some aspects of Anglo-Saxon history.
c.1475	Earliest printing of Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> in Strasbourg.		
1505		Matthew Parker born.	
1559	Sometime during the next few years Archbishop Matthew Parker leaves MSS to Corpus Christi College Cambridge. He prints <i>Alfred's Latin life of Asser</i> in 'the Anglo-Saxon character'.	Matthew Parker made Archbishop of Canterbury.	
1561		Henry Spelman born.	
1563	Laurence Nowell writes his name on the <i>Beowulf</i> manuscript.		
1565	First modern English translation of Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> printed in Antwerp. Laurence Nowell makes and circulates in MS a 'Vocabularium Saxonum', Junius later makes a copy.		
1568	Lambarde prints <i>Anglo-Saxon Laws</i> from transcripts of Laurence Nowell (Nowell also transcribed various <i>Chronicles</i> including Peterborough).		
1570		Robert Cotton born.	
1571	John Foxe prints a copy of the <i>Anglo-Saxon Gospels</i> .		
1575		Parker dies.	
1577	Holinshed's <i>Chronicles</i> published.		
1587	Holinshed's <i>Chronicles</i> enlarged.		
1589		Francis Junius born.	
1598	Bodleian Library founded?		
Late C16/ Early C17			The Anonymous verse play <i>Edmund Ironside</i> . Henslowe produces several plays on Anglo-Saxon subjects at the turn of the century.
1601	Bodleian Library purchases the <i>Anglo-Saxon Gospels</i> from which Foxe printed his copy.		
1604	Bodleian Library opens?		
c.1620-22			Middleton's <i>Hengist, King of Kent</i> . Apparently the first surviving play in which 'Anglo-Saxon' is spoken on stage ('nemp yor sexes' from Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'nimet oure saxes').
1621		Francis Junius arrives in England from Heidelberg and enters household of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel as librarian and tutor.	
1630		Archbishop Laud becomes Vice-Chancellor of Oxford.	

<sup>1</sup> See also *Beowulf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by T.A. Shippey and Andreas Haarder (London: Routledge, 1998).

1631		Sir Robert Cotton dies.	
1639			Milton mentions Bede's 'pleasing story' of Caedmon in his <i>Commonplace Book</i> .
1640	John Spelman's edition of <i>Anglo-Saxon Psalms</i> from the Salisbury Cathedral MS. By now Laud has donated over 1,300 MSS to the Bodleian, including the <i>Peterborough Chronicle</i> .	Henry Spelman founds lectureship in Cambridge to promote study of 'domestique Antiquities touching our Church and reviving the Saxon tongue. 1 <sup>st</sup> lecturer is Abraham Wheloc.	Around now Milton is researching what will eventually become his <i>History of Britain</i> .
1642	The Ruthwell Cross broken up as an 'idolatrous monument'.	George Hickes born.	Milton probably meets Junius this year, or soon after.
1643	Wheloc publishes his edition of Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> in Latin and Saxon (first English edition).		
1644	Wheloc publishes his edition of <i>Anglo-Saxon laws</i> (based on Lambarde), in Latin and Saxon (first English edition) & Latin and Saxon versions of the <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> (first English editions, using Parker's MSS, collated with a C11 Cottonian MS, collated).		
1651	Archbishop Usher gives the 'Junius' Codex to Junius.	Junius leaves England for the Netherlands.	
1653		Wheloc dies & Spelman family transfer the stipend of the Cambridge Lectureship to William Somner in Oxford.	
1655	Junius & William Marshall edit <i>Caedmonis monachi paraphrasis poetica Genesios</i> (using Anglo-Saxon characters, no metrical breaks or translation) & <i>Codex Argentius Gospels</i> , Amsterdam.		
1656	Work begins on Somner's <i>Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum</i> , based largely on Nowell's work, with specially purchased type.		
1658			Milton begins work on <i>Paradise Lost</i> ?
1659	William Somner's <i>Dictionary</i> , completed.	Hickes goes up to St. John's Oxford.	
1661		Robert Harley (collector of MSS) born.	
1662		Thomas Gale gets Master's from Trinity Cambridge.	
1665	Marshall reprints Foxe's <i>Saxon Gospels</i> .	Hickes starts tutoring Anglo-Saxon at Lincoln.	
1666		Gale Professor of Greek at Cambridge.	
1667			Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> first published.
1669		Edmund Gibson born.	
1670	Robert Sheringham at Caius Cambridge publishes a book 'on the origins of the Anglo-Saxon race'.	William Nicholson admitted to Queen's - aged about 15.	Milton's <i>History of Britain</i> published (probably written during 1650s). Last three books cover fifth century to 1066.
1672		William Marshall becomes rector of Lincoln - centre of Saxon studies at this time. Humphrey Wanley born.	
1673		William Elstob born.	
1674		Junius returns to England.	
1675	Lord Christopher Hatton donates numerous Anglo-Saxon antiquities to the Bodleian, including four volumes of <i>Saxon Homilies</i> and <i>Anglo-Saxon Gospels</i> .		
1676	Aylett Samnes, fellow of Christ's College Cambridge publishes a book arguing for Phoenician origin of English race. Refers to Bede and has appendix edition of <i>Laws of Ine</i> .	Junius & Marshall reunited in Oxford.	
1677		Sheringham dies.	



1678	<b>Christopher Ware</b> translates <b>Spelman's</b> unpublished <i>Life of Alfred the Great</i> into Latin and publishes it. After <b>Junius</b> dies, the Bodleian receives his MSS, including the 'Junius Manuscript' and <i>Ormulum</i> .	<b>Junius</b> dies, leaving Oxford his type. <b>Marshall</b> becomes Rector of Lincoln College.	
1679		Queen's College Oxford institute Anglo-Saxon lectureship, held by <b>William Nicolson</b> (24), who lectures every Wednesday. <b>Hickes</b> made Doctor of Divinity in St. Andrews - returns to England later this year.	
1683		<b>Elizabeth Elstob</b> born.	
1689	<b>Hickes's</b> 1st <i>Anglo-Saxon Grammar</i> .	<b>Edmund Gibson</b> (20) and <b>Edward Thwaites</b> (21) arrive at Queen's.	
1690		<b>Richard Rawlinson</b> born.	
1691	<b>Gales's</b> edition of <i>Chronicles</i> . First three items are the texts of <b>Gildas</b> , <b>Nennius</b> <i>Historia Brittonum</i> and <b>Eddi</b> . <i>Life of Wilfrid</i> ( <b>Gildas</b> already published 15 times previously).		
1692	<b>Gibson's</b> edition of <i>Chronicles</i> in parallel Latin and Anglo-Saxon texts.		
1695		<b>Wanley</b> matriculates at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford (Palmer says University Hall, no degree). He becomes a librarian at the Bodleian.	
1696	<b>Thomas Smith's</b> <i>Catalogue of the Cotton Library</i> .	<b>W. Elstob</b> fellow of University College Oxford. Formerly student at Queen's.	
1697	<b>Edward Bernard</b> produces <i>Bernard's Catalogue</i> - a cat. of all the Bodleian MSS - helped by <b>Wanley</b> among others Other MSS from around the country are also described.	The Junian type rescued from 'a hole in Dr. Hyde's study' by <b>Thwaites</b> .	
1698	<b>Thwaites</b> publishes <b>Ælfric's</b> <i>Heptateuchus</i> . <b>Christopher Rawlinson</b> , one of <b>Thwaites's</b> pupils, prepares edition of <b>Alfred's</b> <i>Boethius</i> from <b>Junius's</b> transcripts. <b>W. Elstob's</b> transcript of <i>Orosius</i> .	<b>Thwaites</b> 'preceptor in the Saxon tongue' has 15 A-S pupils at Queen's. <b>Elizabeth Elstob</b> probably moves to Oxford at 15, inspired to A-S studies by seeing her brother's transcription of <i>Orosius</i> .	
1699	<b>Rawlinson's</b> <i>Boethius</i> comes out.	<b>Hickes</b> sends <b>Wanley</b> all over the country looking for Anglo-Saxon MSS. In autumn he is collating Anglo-Saxon MSS in Cambridge. <b>Thwaites</b> appointed preceptor of Anglo-Saxon.	
1700	Cotton library collection is sold to the nation and kept in Ashburnham House. It includes the <i>Beowulf</i> MS.	<b>Wanley</b> moves to London from Oxford.	
1701	<b>Thomas Benson</b> , one of <b>Thwaites's</b> pupils makes a condensed version of <b>Somner's</b> dictionary, <i>Vocabularium Anglo-Saxonicum</i> . <b>William Elstob</b> , another of <b>Thwaites's</b> pupils makes a Latin translation of <b>Wulfstan's</b> <i>Homily</i>		
1702		The <b>Elstobs</b> move to London.	
1703	Work begins on <b>Hickes's</b> <i>Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archaeologicus</i> , <i>linguarum veterum Septentrionalium</i> . Uses Junian type, includes 1st text of <i>The Finnsburh Fragment</i> and <i>The Rune Poem</i> .		
1705	<i>Thesaurus</i> complete, includes <b>Wanley's</b> 'Critical and Historical Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', includes first notice in print of <i>Beowulf</i> .		

1707		Wanley and others have meetings to begin a Society of Antiquaries (later to include William Elstob).	
1708	Elizabeth Elstob's transcript of the Old English Athanasian Creed from the <i>Salisbury Psalter in Conspectus Brevis</i> to Hickes's <i>Thesaurus</i> .	Wanley gets patronage from Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford and extends & catalogues his library.	
1709	Elizabeth Elstob's edition of Ælfric's <i>Homily on St. George's Day</i> with a Latin translation by William Elstob. (Hickes was their G-father) She had intended to do all of Ælfric's <i>Catholic Homilies</i> , but didn't get the financial support for this project. She also embarks on an improved edition of Spelman's <i>Anglo-Saxon Psalms</i> and a projected life of Ælfric, but these projects are never completed. Thomas Hearne edits Spelman's <i>Life of Alfred the Great</i> .		
1711	Hickes's <i>Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica</i> is published in an independent extract from the <i>Thesaurus</i> .	Thwaites dies.	
1712	Jonathon Swift attacks students of Old English in <i>A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue</i> .		
1715	Elizabeth Elstob's <i>Rudiments of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue</i> , for non-linguists. Bishop More donates 30,000 volumes to the University Library at Cambridge, including the oldest MS of Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> .	William Elstob dies, leaving a version of the Saxon laws incomplete (was to include Somner's Latin translation). Hickes dies months later. Harley falls from political favour and his patronage of the Harleian Library is lost. Thomas Hearne also loses his position as under-keeper in the Bodleian Library.	
1718		Elizabeth Elstob disappears around now - ceases to be active in Anglo-Saxon research.	
1721	David Wilkins (Prussian exile) produces a new edition of Old English <i>Laws</i> with the help of Nicolson.		
1722	John Smith at Cambridge edits Bede's vernacular <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> . 1st truly critical edition. Lye's <i>Dictionarium Saxonicum</i> , based on Junius's work.		
1723			Sir Richard Blackmore's <i>Alfred: An Epick Poem in Twelve Books</i> (Alfred journeys around the Mediterranean as a kind of Anglo-Saxon Odysseus).
1724		George I unsuccessfully tries to start teaching of modern languages at Oxford and Cambridge. Robert Harley dies.	
1726	Thomas Hearne prints first text of <i>The Battle of Maldon</i> in an appendix to his <i>Glastonbury Chronicle</i> . He uses an eighteenth-century transcript.	Wanley dies.	
1731	Cottonian MS fire at Ashburnham House. C11 <i>chronicle</i> used by Wheloc almost entirely destroyed.		
1734			James Thomson begins publishing <i>Liberty</i> , a verse world history which includes the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Roman-Britain as the start of 'English' civilization.
1735		Elizabeth Elstob 'discovered' by George Ballard.	

1736			Publication of Thomson's <i>Liberty</i> complete. <b>James Mcpherson</b> born.
1740			<b>Thomson</b> re-writes <b>David Mallet's</b> masque <i>Alfred</i> . The music is by <b>Thomas Arne</b> and concludes with <i>Rule, Britannia</i> .
1743	<b>Edward Lye</b> publishes <b>Junius's</b> <i>Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae</i> , includes a <i>Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica</i> .		
1748		<b>Gibson</b> dies.	
1752	<b>Junius's</b> edition of the 'Caedmonian' <i>Genesis</i> published in Oxford.		<b>William Mason's</b> <i>Elfrida</i> , a dramatic poem. <b>Thomas Chatterton</b> born.
1753	Cottonian collection annexed to the British Library by statute. Harleian collection also purchased by the British Library.		
1755	<b>Percy's</b> <i>Northern Antiquities</i> .	<b>Dr. Richard Rawlinson</b> dies, leaving money for a Professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.	
1756		<b>Elizabeth Elstob</b> dies.	
1757	Cottonian collection physically moved to the British Library buildings.		
1759	<b>Wanley's</b> Harleian collection catalogue posthumously published. <b>Warton</b> may have started his <i>History of English Poetry</i> after this publication.		
1762			<b>James Mcpherson</b> , the Ossianic <i>Fingal. An Ancient Epic Poem</i> .
1765	<b>Percy's</b> <i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry</i> first published.		
1769			<b>Thomas Chatterton</b> at work, including his 'Anglo-Saxon poems'. 'Ethelgar, a Saxon poem' in the <i>Town and Country Magazine</i> , March. 'Cerdick, translated from the Saxon' in the May edition.
1770			<b>Chatterton</b> moves to London from Bristol, dies later in the year.
1771	<b>James Bentham's</b> <i>History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely</i> contains a hagiographic account of the <i>Byrhtnoth of Maldon</i> .		
1777			<b>Richard Cumberland's</b> tragedy <i>The Battle of Hastings</i> in pseudo-Shakespearian blank verse.
1778			<b>Robert Holmes's</b> <i>Alfred, an Ode</i> .
1782		<b>Benjamin Thorpe</b> born.	
1785		<b>Joseph Bosworth</b> born.	
1786		<b>Thorkelin</b> (Icelandic) visits England.	
1787	<b>Thorkelin</b> has two transcripts made of the <i>Beowulf</i> MS while in England.	<b>Thorkelin</b> leaves England.	
1788		?Sir Robert Taylor leaves money for modern languages. institute at Oxford.	
1791			<b>Jane West's</b> play <i>Edmund</i> surnamed <i>Ironsides</i> .
1795		The Rawlinson Anglo-Saxon Chair finally set up at Oxford.	
1796			<b>Mcpherson</b> dies.
1798	1st vol. <b>John Horne Tooke</b> , <i>Divisions of Purley</i> .		
1799	1st vol. <b>Sharon Turner's</b> <i>History of Anglo-Saxons</i> .		
1800			<b>Joseph Cottle</b> (Southey's publisher), publishes <i>Alfred, an Epic Poem in Twenty-Four Books</i> .
1801			<b>Henry James Pye</b> (Poet Laureate since 1790) publishes <i>Alfred; an Epic Poem, in Six Books</i> .

1802	Rev. Henry Duncan reassembles the fragments of the Ruthwell Cross.		Joseph Sympson's <i>Science Revived or The Vision of Alfred</i> ; a poem in eight books, Alfred is the progenitor of Britain. Wordsworth writes the preface to <i>The Lyrical Ballads</i> .
1805	3rd vol. Turner's <i>History of Anglo-Saxons</i> . 2nd vol. Tooke's <i>Divisions of Purley</i> .	John Josias Conybeare Rawlinsonian Professor at Oxford?	
1807	Thorkelin's <i>Beowulf</i> papers destroyed in the naval bombardment of Copenhagen. 2nd edition of Turner's <i>History</i> (2 vols).	John Josias Conybeare Rawlinsonian Professor at Oxford? John Mitchell Kemble born.	Henry Longfellow born.
1808	Frederick Schlegel publishes 'Language and the Wisdom of the Indians', credited with first use of the term 'Indo-Germanic' (later 'Indo-European').		
1809		John Josias Conybeare Rawlinsonian Professor at Oxford?	
1812		Conybeare's last year as Rawlinsonian Professor.	
1815	Thorkelin publishes edition of <i>Beowulf</i> (in Denmark), with philological notes by C. Richardson, supporting 'Horne Tooke's work on etymology' – which attacked Johnson.		
1816			Coleridge's 'Christabel' published with a preface on the metre 'founded on a new principle'.
1817	Erasmus Rask (Dane) publishes what George Marsh calls the 1st complete Anglo-Saxon Grammar, <i>Angel Saksisk Sproglaere</i> .		
1818	Todd's revision of Johnson (containing a little more etymology).	Rask works on comparative principles in philology. Benjamin Thorpe studies under him.	
1819	Grimm's <i>Deutsche Grammatik</i> .		Walter Scott's <i>Ivanhoe</i> .
1820	Grundtvig produces a Danish version of Thorkelin's <i>Beowulf</i> with emendations. The third edition of Turner's <i>History of the Anglo-Saxons</i> .		
1822	Vercelli Book inspected by Friedrich Blume. 2nd edition of Grimm's <i>Deutsche Grammatik</i> .	Jacob Grimm working on philology. J. M. Kemble studies under him.	1st publication of William Wordsworth's <i>Ecclesiastical Sonnets</i> ; includes a number of poems on Anglo-Saxon themes, taking Bede and Sharon Turner's <i>History</i> as sources.
1823	<i>Saxon Chronicles</i> ed. by James Ingram. Joseph Bosworth's <i>The Elements of Anglo-Saxon Grammar</i> .		Richard Payne Knight's <i>Alfred; a Romance in Rhyme</i> .
1824	Richard Price edits Thomas Warton's <i>The History of English Poetry</i> , first published 1774-81, but starting then in the 11th century. Now dealing also with Anglo-Saxon.	Conybeare dies.	
1826	John Conybeare's <i>Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry</i> brought out by his brother William. It includes extracts from <i>Genesis</i> , <i>Exodus</i> , <i>Widsith</i> , <i>Maxims</i> , <i>Deor</i> , <i>The Ruin</i> , <i>Finnsburh</i> , <i>Maldon</i> , Caedmon's Hymn and various riddles, with Latin translations. Joseph Bosworth's <i>A Compendious Grammar of the Primitive English or Anglo-Saxon language</i>		Longfellow visits Europe for three years.
1828	Nonh Webster's Dictionary.	Rev. Thomas Dale Professor of English Language & Literature at University College, London.	
1829	J. S. Cardale's <i>King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius</i> , " <i>De Consolatione Philosophiae</i> "; with an English translation		

1830	<b>Rask's</b> <i>Grammar of the Anglo-Saxon Tongue</i> is translated into English by <b>Benjamin Thorpe</b> .	<b>Dale</b> finishes at UCL. <b>Alexander Blair</b> takes over, teaches Anglo-Saxon to the senior class. <b>Kemble</b> abandons his plan to be ordained and dedicates himself to Anglo-Saxon studies.	<b>Tennyson</b> addresses a sonnet to <b>Kemble</b> (they were friends at Cambridge). This or next year he translates lines 258-62 of <i>Beowulf</i> .
1831	<b>Sir Francis Palgrave's</b> <i>History of England: Anglo-Saxon Period</i> .		
1832	<b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> edition of <i>Caedmon's Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of the Holy Scriptures, in Anglo-Saxon; with an English translation</i> . Information of <b>Blume's</b> discovery of the <i>Vercelli Codex</i> reaches <b>Charles Cooper</b> , who arranges for a transcription to be made.	Boden Chair of Sanskrit created at Oxford. <b>H. H. Wilson</b> holds it 1st.	<b>William Barnes</b> publishes 'Compounds in the English Language' in <i>The Gentleman's Magazine</i> . <b>Tennyson</b> in correspondence with <b>Kemble</b> while the latter at work on <i>Beowulf</i> .
1833	<b>Kemble's</b> edition of <i>Beowulf</i> (printed in only 100 copies). <b>Henry Ellis's</b> <i>Account of Caedmon's Metrical Paraphrase of Scripture History</i> , including reproductions of the MS. illustrations. <b>Francis Bopp's</b> <i>Comparative Grammar</i> (of Indo-European). <b>Maier</b> begins to transcribe the contents of the <i>Vercelli Book</i> , completes the task early next year.		
1834	<b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> <i>Analecta Anglo-Saxonica</i> . Includes <i>Judith</i> and <i>Maldon</i> .		<b>William Morris</b> born.
1835	<b>Kemble's</b> <i>Beowulf</i> with a translation, vol. 1.	<b>Dale</b> 1st Professor of English Literature & History at King's College, London.	
1836	<b>Richardson's</b> <i>New Dictionary of the English Language</i> starts to be published. Its etymologies are based on those of <b>John Horne Tooke</b> . <b>Turner's</b> <i>History</i> now in its 6th edition (3 vols).	<b>Blair</b> succeeded by <b>Henry Rogers</b> at UCL.	<b>Longfellow</b> made the Smith professor at Harvard. Lectures on mediaeval and modern European literature, including Anglo-Saxon. Continues until 1854.
1837	<b>Kemble's</b> <i>Beowulf</i> with a translation, vol. 2. <b>Richardson's</b> <i>New Dictionary</i> complete. <b>Joseph Bosworth's</b> <i>Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language</i> .	<b>Kemble</b> attacks Oxford's Anglo-Saxon as too old-fashioned and unaware of <b>Grimm's</b> principles.	
1838	<b>Edwin Guest's</b> <i>A History of English Rhythms</i> .	<b>Jowett</b> fellow at Balliol, Oxford.	<b>Longfellow</b> favourably reviews several works of A-S scholarship, including <b>Kemble's</b> <i>Beowulf</i> in <i>North American Review</i> .
1839		<b>Robert Gordon Latham</b> (a philologist) takes Chair at UCL, teaches Anglo-Saxon there.	
1840	<b>Grimm</b> publishes <i>Andreas</i> and <i>Elene</i> for the first time.	<b>Dale</b> finishes at KCL. <b>F. D. Maurice</b> takes over. <b>Thomas Arnold's</b> inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. Argues that national identity in 'blood and language' is traced back to the Saxon conquest of 'England'.	
1842	<b>Thomas Wright's</b> <i>Biographia Britannica Literaria</i> , vol 1 (Anglo-Saxon). <b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> edition and translation of the <i>Codex Exoniensis</i> (contains most the <i>The Exeter Book</i> poems except for a few riddles).	Philological Society founded.	
1843	<b>H. G. Liddell</b> and <b>R. Scott's</b> <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , based on etymological and philological principles of German scholarship. 1st part of <b>J. M. Kemble's</b> <i>Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis</i> , with English translation (based on <b>Grimm</b> ).	<b>Francis H. Trithem</b> delivers "Introductory Lecture to the Comparative Study of Languages." at Rugby school.	



1844	<b>Karl Müllenhoff's</b> <i>Nordalbingische Studien</i> , founds the theory that ancient Teutonic verse (including Anglo-Saxon) is all strophic in origin.		<b>Gerard Manly Hopkins</b> born.
1845	<b>Dale</b> reissues <b>Hugh Blair's</b> <i>Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres</i> (1783) with a new preface, which does not have a high opinion of <i>Beowulf</i> , although calls it a Saxon <i>Iliad</i> . <b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> translation of <b>Lappenberg's</b> <i>German History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings</i> . <b>Charles Knight's</b> <i>Old England</i> , contains translations of Caedmon's Hymn and an extract from <i>Brunanburh</i> .	<b>Tom Taylor</b> takes over at UCL. He sets an exam paper on language and literature up to Chaucer.	<b>Longfellow</b> publishes <i>Poets and Poetry of Europe</i> , collection of translations (including some of Longfellow's) from over 400 poets, in ten languages, including some Anglo-Saxon verse.
1846	2nd edition of <b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> <i>Analecta Anglo-Saxonica</i> .	Proposal at Durham for a Readership of Anglo-Saxon & Old English Literature fails. <b>E. A. Freeman</b> , Oxford Professor of History praises 'pure English' derived from Teutonic English.	
1847	<b>J. O. Halliwell's</b> <i>Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words</i> . <b>William Hazlitt</b> translates and publishes <i>History of the Conquest of England by the Normans</i> , by Augustin Thierry, first published in Paris in 1825.	<b>Frederick Furnivall</b> joins Philological Society.	
1848	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicles</i> are published in <i>Monumenta Historica Britannica</i> . <b>Ernest Renan's</b> <i>De l'Origine du langage</i> , which Farrar later draws on. <b>Joseph Bosworth's</b> <i>The Origin of the English, Germanic and Scandinavian Language, and Nations</i> .	<b>A. J. Scott</b> takes over at UCL. <b>Trithem</b> is 1st Taylorian Professor of modern languages at Oxford.	
1849	<b>J. M. Kemble, The Saxons in England</b> . Argues that some Saxons had been living in Britain before the traditional dates of invasion (and so are more 'native').	<b>John Earle</b> takes Anglo-Saxon Chair at Oxford.	
1850		<b>Arthur Hugh Clough</b> takes over at UCL. <b>Trithem</b> mentally unstable, a deputy position is created to lecture, this is held by <b>Max Müller</b> , 27 years old. Russell Commission at Oxford, <b>Jowett</b> suggests a Chair of comparative philology.	
1851	<b>Richard C. Trench's</b> <i>On the Study of Words</i> . <b>Ogilvie's</b> <i>Imperial Dictionary</i> .		
1852	By now there have been 7 editions of <b>Turner's</b> <i>History</i> . <b>Bopp's</b> <i>Vergleichende Grammatik</i> .	<b>David Mason</b> takes Chair at UCL. Moderations is introduced at Oxford as language training before classical Greats.	
1853		<b>Trithem</b> dies. <b>Müller</b> now Taylorian Professor of modern languages. <b>Furnivall</b> becomes joint secretary of the Philological Society.	<b>Ruskin</b> begins publication of <i>Stones of Venice</i> , in which he defends 'gothic' and 'northern' art from charges of savagery. <b>Morris</b> to Exeter College, Oxford.
1854	<b>Müller</b> asked by the army to produce pamphlet on languages of the seat of war in the East.	<b>Earle</b> leaves Anglo-Saxon Chair at Oxford. <b>Robert Scott</b> made master of Balliol over Jowett due to religious dispute.	<b>William Barnes's</b> <i>A Philological Grammar</i> . <b>Longfellow</b> ceases to lecture at Harvard.
1855	<b>Trench</b> <i>English, Past and Present</i> , one chapter deals with English as it might have been. Last vol. <b>Ogilvie's</b> <i>Imperial Dictionary</i> . <b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> edition of <i>Beowulf</i> , including translation.	English language and literature included in the examination for entrance to the Indian Civil Service.	<b>Ruskin</b> complete publication of <i>Stones of Venice</i> .



1856	2nd part of <b>Kemble's</b> <i>Poetry of the Codex Vercellensis</i> .		<b>Morris</b> finishes at Oxford to become an architect.
1857	<b>Thomas Wright's</b> <i>Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English</i> .	<b>Kemble</b> dies. <b>Trench</b> first proposes to members of the Philological Society the publication of a <i>New English Dictionary</i> .	<b>Morris</b> meets <b>Swinburne</b> . <b>Coventry Patmore</b> <i>English Metrical Law</i> , states we mentally carry frames of fours, not more. Three stresses really have a silent fourth.
1858		Anglo-Saxon Chair at Oxford has its duties extended to include Old Low German dialects. Restrictions on the Chair, presently held by <b>Joseph Bosworth</b> , are curtailed. English required for Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. <b>George Marsh</b> delivers his "Post-Graduate Lectures" at Colombia College, NYC fall/winter 1858-59.	<b>Morris's</b> <i>The Defence of Guenevere</i> .
1859	<b>George Marsh's</b> <i>Lectures on the English Language</i> 1st published in USA. Proposal for the publication of the <i>NED</i> 1st published. <b>Hensleigh Wedgwood</b> (a founder of the Philological Society) 1st vol. of <i>Dictionary of English Etymology</i> (pro-onomatopoeia).	First B.A. examination in English held at London University. <b>James Murray</b> finds a copy of Bohn's edition of Pauli's <i>Life of Alfred the Great</i> including Alfred's translation into Anglo-Saxon of Orosius' <i>Historiarum adversum Paganos</i> . Starts to teach himself Anglo-Saxon.	<b>Swinburne</b> leaves Balliol. <b>Barnes's</b> <i>Se Gefylsta</i> .
1860	<b>Frederic W. Farrar's</b> <i>Essay on Origin of Lang.</i> , based on <i>Modern Researches</i> , esp. <i>Works of M. Renan</i> (pro-onomatopoeia). <b>W. H. F. Bosanquet's</b> translation <i>The Fall of Man or Paradise Lost of Caedmon</i> . <i>Waldere</i> fragment discovered in Copenhagen library and published by <b>George Stephens</b> . British publication of <b>George Marsh's</b> <i>Lectures</i> .	<b>Müller</b> delivers lectures on "Principles of Etymology", tracing of English to Gothic via Anglo-Saxon. Work begins on the <i>NED</i> with <b>Herbert Coleridge</b> as the 1st editor.	
1861	<b>Benjamin Thorpe's</b> edition of the <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicles</i> , 2 vols, text of all MSS with a translation. <b>Grundtvig's</b> (German) edition of <i>Beowulf</i> , which is recommended to students by <b>Morley</b> (if they don't require an English gloss or translation). <b>Karl Müllenhof</b> proposes that Anglo-Saxon verse was originally strophic.	<b>Max Müller's</b> lectures on 'The Science of Language' delivered at the Royal Institute, London (anti-onomatopoeia). <b>Murray</b> meets Canon <b>Greenwell</b> , who lends him mediaeval texts from Durham Cathedral Library. <b>Murray</b> starts to teach Anglo-Saxon to his schoolchildren at Hawick Academy. <b>Coleridge</b> dies and <b>Furnivall</b> takes over editorship of <i>NED</i> .	
1862	<b>Marsh's</b> <i>Lectures</i> 1st published in London.	<b>Hopkins's</b> father sends <b>Müller</b> his book <i>Hawaii</i> . <b>Eiríkur Magnússon</b> comes to England to supervise publication of Icelandic literature. Regius chair of English language and literature established at Glasgow. <b>Furnivall</b> becomes sole secretary of the Philological Society.	
1863		<b>Müller's</b> second series of lectures.	April, <b>Hopkins</b> goes to Balliol, Oxford. Writes in his notebooks that the onomatopoeic theory has not had a fair chance.
1864	<b>Webster's</b> <i>Dictionary</i> revised and enlarged. <b>Henry Morley</b> , <i>English Writers, The Writers Before Chaucer</i> .	<b>Trench</b> , <b>Furnivall</b> & others found the Early English Text Society. <b>Pater</b> becomes Fellow of Brasenose	<b>Hopkins</b> takes 1st class Honours in Moderations.

1865	<b>John Earle's</b> <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , 2 texts in parallel. <b>Wedgwood's</b> 3rd vol. of <i>Dictionary of Eng. Etymology</i> . <b>Farrar's</b> <i>Chapters on Language</i> , defending his earlier work against Müller's objections.	<b>David Masson</b> (from UCL) appointed Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh.	<b>Hopkins</b> had read Müller by now. Meets <b>Bridges</b> .
1866	<b>Wedgwood's</b> <i>On the Origin of Language</i> .		<b>Pater</b> teaches <b>Hopkins</b> for a term. Some of his essays written for <b>Robert Scott</b> , Master of Balliol.
1867	1st vol. <b>Edward Augustus Freeman</b> <i>History of the Norman Conquest</i> . The Franks Casket presented to the British Museum. <b>Morley's</b> <i>English Writers</i> reprinted because it proved more popular with students than anticipated (intended for general reader). <b>R. Morris's</b> <i>Specimens of Early English</i> (Middle English, but with extensive reference to Anglo-Saxon in grammar and literary notes).	Cambridge has only 2 lecturers in English at this time.	<b>Hopkins</b> takes 1st at 'Greats'. <b>Morris's</b> <i>The Life and Death of Jason</i>
1868		Chair of Comparative Philology created for Müller.	<b>Hopkins</b> enters Roehampton noviciate. <b>Hopkins</b> briefly sees <b>Swinburne</b> in Oxford. <b>Hopkins</b> burns his earlier poems. <b>Morris</b> meets <b>Magnusson</b> who starts to teach him Old Norse. <b>Morris's</b> <i>The Earthly Paradise</i> (v. 1-2).
1869	1st vol of <b>A. J. Ellis</b> <i>Early English Pronunciation</i> .		<b>Morris &amp; Magnusson</b> translate <i>Grunnlaug's Saga &amp; Grettis Saga</i> .
1870	<b>Jowett's</b> <i>Cratylus</i> . <b>Francis A. March's</b> <i>Introduction to Anglo-Saxon</i> (a reader with notes, grammar and vocabulary), published in New York.	<b>Jowett</b> replaces <b>Scott</b> as Master of Balliol. <b>Thorpe</b> dies.	<b>Hopkins</b> goes to St. Mary's, Stonyhurst. <b>Morris's</b> <i>The Earthly Paradise</i> (v. 3). <b>Morris &amp; Magnusson</b> translate <i>Volsunga Saga</i> .
1871	<b>Thomas Warton's</b> <i>History of English Poetry</i> (vol. II) now includes <b>Henry Sweet</b> on Anglo-Saxon poetry. <b>H. A. Taine's</b> <i>History of English Literature</i> translated into English.	<b>Magnusson</b> given post at Cambridge. <b>Henry Nicol</b> becomes <i>NED</i> editor.	<b>Morris &amp; Magnusson &amp; Faulkner</b> go to Iceland.
1872	<b>John Earle's</b> edition of <i>An ancient Saxon Poem of a City in Ruins, supposed to be Bath</i> .		<b>Morris's</b> <i>Love is Enough</i> .
1873	<b>Henry Morley, A First Sketch of English Literature</b> .	<b>Henry Sweet</b> takes a 4th class degree from Balliol, Oxford. While an undergraduate he had published an edition of the <i>Alfredian Cura Pastoralis</i> . English Dialect Society founded - <b>W. W. Skeat</b> is secretary. English Literature becomes one of the Pass Degree requirements at Oxford - the earliest literature is <b>Chaucer</b> and <i>Piers Plowman</i> .	<b>Morris</b> revisits Iceland. 28 August <b>Hopkins</b> begins to teach his course in rhetoric back at Roehampton, Manresa House. <b>Hopkins</b> probably starts notes on 'Rhythm and the other structural parts of rhetoric - verse'.
1874	4th (last) volume of <b>Ellis's</b> <i>Early English Pronunciation</i> .		<b>Hopkins</b> finishes the rhetoric course & goes to St. Bueno's, Wales, 28 August. Begins to study Welsh. Had read <b>Marsh</b> by now.
1875	2nd edn. <b>Farrar's</b> <i>Chapters</i> . 2nd edn. <b>Müller's</b> 2 series of <i>Lectures</i> . <b>Stephen H. Carpenter's</b> <i>An Introduction to the Study of the Anglo-Saxon Language</i> (Boston).		Winter, <b>Hopkins</b> begins <i>The Wreck of the Deutschland</i> , finished next year.
1876	<b>Henry Sweet's</b> <i>Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> . 5th vol. of <b>Freeman's</b> <i>Norman Conquest</i> . <b>T. Arnold's</b> prose translation of <i>Beowulf</i> .	<b>Earle</b> takes Anglo-Saxon Chair at Oxford for 2nd time. <b>Murray</b> named as editor of <i>NED</i> . <b>Joseph Bosworth</b> dies.	<b>Morris</b> begins to become politically active as a socialist. <b>Morris's</b> <i>Sigurd the Volsung</i> . <b>Hallam Tennyson</b> publishes his prose translation of <i>The Battle of Brunanburh</i> in <i>Contemporary Review</i> . <b>Alfred Tennyson</b> probably makes his verse translation of the same poem.

1877		Sweet makes presidential address to the Philological Society.	Hopkins ordained as priest. Leaves Wales.
1878	Farrar's <i>Chapters</i> reissued with <i>Families of Speech</i> .	Elrington & Bosworth Chair of Anglo-Saxon founded in Cambridge. Skeat appointed. English studied with Medieval and Modern Languages at Cambridge - philological emphasis. Murray secures support of OUP for NED.	Barnes's <i>An Outline of English Speechcraft</i> .
1879	John Earle <i>A Book for the Beginner in Anglo-Saxon</i> (2nd edition).		Patmore's <i>English Metrical Critics</i> reissued as <i>Prefatory Study on English Metrical Law with Amelia and Other Poems</i> (discusses Anglo-Saxon and rhythm). Hopkins probably read this then.
1880	Sidney Lanier <i>The Science of English Verse</i> , argues English rhythm is based on duration, not stress. Says most Anglo-Saxon is in 3/8 rhythm. Deals with 'Wanderer' and 'Battle of Maldon'. Frederick Metcalfe, <i>The Englishman and the Scandinavian; or a comparison of Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Literature</i> .		Barnes's <i>Outline of Rede-Craft (Logic) with English Wordings</i> . Tennyson's translation of <i>Brunanburh</i> published in <i>Ballads and Other Poems</i> .
1881	J. R. Green's <i>Making of England</i> . H. W. Lumsden's verse translation of <i>Beowulf</i> .	Lanier dies. Mason College, Birmingham extended & a Faculty of Arts created. Anglo-Saxon taught in German dept.	
1882	Skeat's <i>Etymological Dictionary of the English Language</i> . J. M. Garnett's verse translation of <i>Beowulf</i> .	English becomes one obligatory part of a degree in Modern Languages at Cambridge. Jowett becomes Vice-Chancellor of Oxford.	Hopkins reads <i>Piers Plowman</i> and studies Anglo-Saxon. Has read Barnes's <i>Speech-craft</i> by now.
1883	J. R. Green's <i>The Conquest of England</i> . B. Ten Brink's <i>Geschichte der englischen Litteratur</i> is translated by H. M. Kennedy (published in German in 1877). Hermann Müller argues that <i>Widsith</i> is strophic.		
1884	1st part of the NED published. John Earle, <i>Anglo-Saxon Literature</i> .		Hopkins reads about Lanier in <i>the Century</i> . Admires some of his ideas on scansion and form.
1885	Edward Sievers's <i>Zur Rhythmik des germanischen Alliterationsverse</i> .	Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature established at Oxford. 1st held by Arthur Napier, a philologist who had studied Anglo-Saxon with Earle at Oxford. Murray moves to Oxford.	Ezra Pound born.
1886	Trench's <i>Study of Words</i> now in 19th edn.	Medieval and Modern Languages (inc. English) becomes a full Tripos at Cambridge. Jowett's Vice-Chancellorship ends. Henry Bradley joins the NED project.	Morris lectures on 'Early England' to the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League.
1887	Morley's <i>English Writers: An attempt towards a History of English Literature</i> .	Skeat asks Joseph Wright to edit the <i>Dialect Dictionary</i> . Bradley becomes co-editor of the NED.	Morris translates <i>The Odyssey</i> .
1888	Trench's <i>Study</i> now in 20th edition. Ten Brink's edition of <i>Beowulf</i> .	Müller brings Wright to Oxford to lecture on Gothic and Anglo-Saxon to the Association for the Higher Education of Women.	
1889	Trench's <i>English Language Past &amp; Present</i> now in 14th edn.		Hopkins dies.

1890	Magnusson starts Saga Library.	Lectureship in Teutonic Philology created at Oxford for Wright.	Morris starts the Kelmescott Press. Morris's <i>News from Nowhere</i> .
1891	James W. Bright's <i>Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> (New York).	Wright becomes Müller's deputy.	Skeat's <i>Essay on the Rowley Poems</i> settles the matter of the authenticity of Chatterton's Rowley poems.
1892	Rev. Charles Plummer's <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , parallel texts & gloss, 1st vol. Stopford Brooke's <i>History of Early English Literature</i> (includes translated extracts of many Anglo-Saxon poems). J. Earle's prose translation of <i>Beowulf</i> . J. Leslie Hall's verse translation of <i>Beowulf</i> . W. W. Skeat's <i>Twelve Facsimiles of Old English MSS.</i>		
1893	Edward Sievers's <i>Altgermanische Metrik</i> . G. E. MacLennan's <i>An Old and Middle English Reader</i> (New York).	1st Chair of English at Aberdeen. Jowett dies.	
1894	7th edition of Sweet's <i>Reader</i> . A. J. Wyatt's edition of <i>Beowulf</i> .	Decision at Oxford to institute the English School. Paper 1 to be OE Texts ( <i>Beowulf</i> & Sweet's <i>A-S Reader</i> ) Paper 5 History of the English Language & Paper 7 Gothic ( <i>Gospel of St. Mark</i> ) & unseen translations from OE and ME.	
1895	Part 1 of <i>The Exeter Book</i> , edited with translation by Gollancz Israel (completed 1934).	Saintsbury replaces Masson as Professor at Edinburgh. Charles Talbot Onions joins NED project.	Morris's <i>Tale of Beowulf</i> .
1896	Morley's <i>First Sketch of English Literature</i> in its eighth revised edition.	First examinations in English language and literature at Oxford.	Morris dies.
1897		1st Chair of English at St. Andrews. William Alexander Craigie joins NED project.	
1898	1st installment of Wright's <i>English Dialect Dictionary</i> appears (Hopkins contributor). Stopford Brooke's <i>English Literature from the beginning to the Norman Conquest</i> .	Henry Wyld (student of Sweet) becomes a lecturer in English language at Liverpool.	
1899	2nd vol. Plummer's <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> with introduction notes, index. 2nd edition of Wyatt's <i>Beowulf</i> .		
1900		Murray gives the Oxford Romanes Lecture on 'The Evolution of English Lexicography'.	
1901	J. R. Clark Hall's translation of <i>Beowulf</i> .	Chair of Comparative Philology taken by Wright at Oxford after Müller's death. Sweet gets Oxford Readership in Phonetics. Craigie becomes 3rd editor of NED.	
1902	A. S. Cook and C. B. Tinker, <i>Select translations from Old English poetry</i> .		College verse by Pound about the 'Gods of the North', Thor and Odin.
1903	C. B. Tinker's critical bibliography of translations of <i>Beowulf</i> .	Earle dies. Rawlinson Anglo-Saxon Chair amalgamated with Merton Professorship of English Language & Literature. Napier takes it.	
1904		Baines Professorship of English Language and Philology created at Liverpool. Wyld 1st to hold it.	Pound studies Anglo-Saxon with Professor Joseph D. Ibbotson at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York. Translates Alfred's account of <i>Ohthere and Wulfstan</i> . Writes a poem based on <i>Cædmon</i> .
1905	Wright's <i>Dialect Dictionary</i> complete. A. S. Cook's edition of <i>The Dream of the Rood</i> .	Walter Raleigh starts to reform the examinations of the School of English.	Pound reads <i>Beowulf</i> in Wyatt's edition and completes his studies with Ibbotson.

1907	<i>The Cambridge History of English Literature</i> . H. M. Chadwick's <i>Origin of the English Nation</i> .		W. H. Auden born.
1908		Raleigh's changes mean that language and literature students of the School of English must sit four compulsory papers, one is on 'Beowulf and other Old English texts.'	
1909	Lanier, <i>The Death of Byrhtnoth</i> , A Study of Anglo-Saxon Poetry in <i>Music and Poetry</i> . O. T. Williams's <i>Short Extracts from Old English Poetry</i> . Francis Gummere, <i>The Oldest English Epic</i> , imitative translations of <i>Finnsburh</i> , <i>Waldere</i> , <i>Widsith</i> and <i>Deor</i> (New York).		
1910	Frederick Tupper's edition of <i>The Riddles of the Exeter Book</i> (Boston).	Henry Ellershaw made 1st Professor of English Language & Literature at Durham. Furnivall dies.	
1911		Sweet dies. Murray lectures at the Oxford School of English on 'Language and Words'.	Pound's 'Seafarer' in <i>The New Age</i> .
1912	W. P. Ker <i>Mediaeval English Literature</i> . R. W. Chamber's edition of <i>Widsith</i> , with translation. A. J. Wyatt's edition of <i>Old English Riddles</i> .	Skeat dies. H. M. Chadwick takes the Anglo-Saxon Chair at Cambridge.	Pound's 'Seafarer' in <i>Ripostes</i> .
1913	Fr. Klaeber's edition of <i>The Later Genesis and Other Old English and Old Saxon Texts Relating to the Fall of Man</i> .		
1914	Blanche Williams edits <i>Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon</i> .	Onions becomes 4th co-editor of <i>NED</i> .	
1915	Bruce Dickens' <i>Runic and Heroic Poems of the Old Teutonic Peoples</i> , with translation.	Murray dies.	Pound reprints his 'Seafarer' in <i>Cathay</i> . Probably begins work on the <i>Ur-Cantos</i> .
1916	Charles Kennedy's prose translation of <i>The Caedmon Poems</i> .	Napier dies. Two chairs separate, Craige takes Rawlinson & Bosworth Chair of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.	
1917	4th edition of Wright's <i>Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> .		Pound publishes 'A Draft of Three Cantos'.
1918	Cosette Faust and Stith Thompson, <i>Old English Poems, Translated into the Original Meter</i> (Chicago).		1st publication of a collection of Hopkins's poems.
1919	Wyatt's <i>An Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> .		
1920		Wyld comes to Oxford to take the Merton Chair, left vacant since Napier's death.	
1921	Duncan Spaeth's alliterative verse translations in <i>Old English Poetry</i> (Princeton).	The Board of Education Report suggested that Old & Middle English should not be compulsory, but rather alternatives to medieval Latin or French.	
1922	R. W. Chambers publishes <i>The Teaching of English in the Universities of England</i> arguing mediaeval English should be kept on the syllabus. W. J. Sedgefield's <i>An Anglo-Saxon Verse Book</i> . Nora Kershaw's <i>Anglo-Saxon and Norse Poems</i> (with translation). Fr. Klaeber's <i>Beowulf</i> .		Pound at work on 'Canto II'.
1923	1st volume of W. A. Craige's <i>Specimens of Anglo-Saxon Poetry</i> .	Chambers succeeds Ker as Professor at UCL. His inaugural lecture defends the German criticism of philologists & Skeat. Bradley dies.	

1926	2nd volume of <b>Craigie's</b> <i>Specimens of Anglo-Saxon Poetry</i> . <b>Wyatt's</b> <i>The Threshold of Anglo-Saxon</i> (New York). <b>Robert K. Gordon's</b> <i>Anglo-Saxon Poetry</i> , prose translations.	1st time degrees in English only are possible at Cambridge.	<b>Auden</b> switches from Biology to English at Oxford.
1927	<b>Israel Gollancz's</b> full-size facsimile of the Junius MS. <b>Milton H. Turk's</b> <i>An Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> (New York). <b>Craigie's</b> <i>Easy Readings in Anglo-Saxon</i> .		
1928	Last part of the <i>NED</i> published.		<b>Auden</b> leaves Oxford. First draft of 'Paid on Both Sides'.
1929	<b>George Krapp and Arthur Kennedy's</b> <i>An Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> (New York).		
1930			2nd edition of <b>Hopkins's</b> poems. <b>Pound</b> publishes 'A Draft of XXX Cantos'. <b>Auden's</b> <i>Poems</i> (including 'Paid').
1931	3rd volume of <b>Craigie's</b> <i>Specimens of Anglo-Saxon Poetry</i> .		<b>Auden</b> at work on <i>The Orators</i> .
1933	Reissue of <i>New English Dictionary</i> , (now <i>OED</i> ) with supplement, introduction and bibliography, Philological Society. Complete facsimile of <i>The Exeter Book</i> MS. by <b>Chambers, Förster and Flower</b> .		<b>Auden's</b> <i>Poems</i> reprinted.
1934	Part 2 of <i>The Exeter Book</i> , edited and translated by <b>W. S. Mackie</b> (started in 1895).		
1935	<i>Parker Chronicle</i> , ed. <b>A. H. Smith</b> . <b>James R. Hulbert</b> revises and enlarges <b>Bright's</b> <i>Anglo-Saxon Reader</i> .		
1937			<b>David Jones's</b> <i>In Parenthesis</i> .
1939			<b>Edwin Morgan</b> begins to study Anglo-Saxon.
1941	<i>Parker Chronicles &amp; Laws</i> facs. ed. <b>Robin Flower &amp; Hugh Smith</b> , E.E.T.S.		
1944			<b>Auden</b> begins <i>the Age of Anxiety</i> .
1946			<b>Auden</b> completes <i>The Age of Anxiety</i> . <b>Morgan</b> resumes his Anglo-Saxon studies.
1952			<b>David Jones's</b> <i>The Anathemata</i> . <b>Morgan's</b> translation of <i>Beowulf</i> , and his first collection of poems <i>Dies Irae</i> (including translations and imitations of Anglo-Saxon poetry).
1953	<b>Plummer's</b> <i>Chronicle</i> reprinted. <b>Garmonsway's</b> Everyman translation of <i>Chronicles</i> .		
1954		<b>Sisam</b> attacks <b>Pound's</b> 'Seafarer' in the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> .	



## Hopkins's Examination Syllabus for Moderations

It has been noted before that the etymological entries in Hopkins's diary peter out rather sharply after September 1864.<sup>1</sup> Soon after this date Hopkins sat his Moderations,<sup>2</sup> for which students were expected to show some knowledge of basic philological principles. Given the coincidence between the end of these diary entries and his success in Moderations, it is likely that the etymological notes were made, at least in part, as preparation for the examination. It is therefore worth investigating the sorts of questions Hopkins had to answer in that examination, for the required syllabus of study for Moderations may well have conditioned or influenced his ideas on language at a formative stage in his intellectual development.

According to the Oxford University Calendar for the years 1863–1867, 'candidates for Honours in Classics [at Moderations] have to answer deeper questions in Philology and Criticism.'<sup>3</sup> These 'deeper questions in Philology and Criticism' were always asked in the critical paper (part XIX), near the end of the examination, which also included Latin and Greek prose compositions and translations from set authors. According to the conditions set out in the *Calendar*, Moderations was normally taken after the student's seventh term at Oxford. Hopkins went up in April 1863, and was therefore only in his

<sup>1</sup> See Cary H. Plotkin, *The Tenth Muse: Victorian Philology and the Genesis of the Poetic Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p.43. The last full phonosemantic series in Hopkins's journal (on 'twig'), comes after an entry dated 23 September and is followed a few entries later by a note that begins 'saw a curious thing on, I think, Oct 1.' Subsequently there are very brief entries on Yorkshire dialect 'wick' and on 'cover', although they are not concerned with parallels between sound and sense relationships and possible shared etymological roots. *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Humphry House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 47-50.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins's initials are recorded among those from Balliol who took 1st Class Honours in Classics Moderations in Michaelmas 1864. *The Oxford University Calendar, 1864* (Oxford: Henry & Parker; London: Slatter & Rose, 1864).

fifth term when he took his first in Moderations. This may partly explain his reputation as 'the star of Balliol'.

Unfortunately, the Moderations papers from 1864 and 1865 do not seem to have survived in the Bodleian Library. From Hopkins's time, the surviving papers held there include questions set in Easter 1863, Michaelmas 1866 and Easter 1867, as well as the First Public Examination in *Literis Graecis et Latinis* for Easter 1863, Michaelmas 1863, Trinity 1866, Michaelmas 1866, Easter 1867 and Michaelmas 1867. Where both sets of papers have survived for the same date (for example Moderations Easter 1863, and the First Public Examination in *Literis Graecis et Latinis* Easter 1863), the questions are duplicated, although the lay-out and pagination of the papers are different. Whatever purpose the alternatively titled papers served, we can be sure that the questions therein are of the same style and format as the ones which Hopkins answered in Michaelmas 1864. The papers from 1863 are of interest, for Hopkins probably consulted them in preparation for his own papers. Together with the other papers they also indicate the kind of ideas about language which were being taught while Hopkins was at Oxford.<sup>4</sup> Although the questions deal with Greek and Latin, in order to answer them, a knowledge of Germanic philology and the laws governing sound shifts as formulated by Bopp, Rask and Grimm is necessary (Burrows's *Pass and Class* clarifies this requirement).

<sup>3</sup> Under 'Examinations and Exercises for Degrees', *The Oxford University Calendar, 1864* (Oxford: Henry & Parker; London: Slatter & Rose, 1864), pp. 112–21.

<sup>4</sup> At least some of these questions must have been set by Jowett, the Regius Professor of Greek during this period and interested in matters of philology: he was the authoritative editor of Plato's dialogue on language origin (*Cratylus*), and a supporter of the onomatopoeic theory of language. Jowett was also one of Hopkins's tutors. For a list of some of the authors recommended to students in preparation for the philological questions in Moderations, see Montagu Burrows, *Pass and Class: An Oxford guide-book through the courses of Literae humaniores*, 2nd edn (1861) and Plotkin, *Tenth Muse*, pp. 44–6. Max Müller's *Lectures* are among the suggested reading.

Many of the questions imply an understanding of the same methodology which Hopkins employed in his word-series diary entries:

*What etymologies have been proposed for ὅν? Trace the meaning of this conjunction in its various uses and combinations. (Q5. Easter, 1863).*

*Trace, and illustrate by quotations, the various meanings of the following words: - πρόσκειμαι, σύμβολον, τριβή, ἐρείδω, ἀφορμή, καταστροφή, lego, discrimen, numerus, quæstus, præsens, stringo, lentus, haurio. (Q4. Michaelmas, 1866).*

*Give the meaning and etymological affinities of ὁσσομαι, ἀντιάω, οὐλαμός, θεσφατος, εὐδελος, ὑπερφιάλος, εὐτε. (Q4. Easter, 1867).*

*Explain the etymological relation (if any) between the Greek and Latin words in each of the following pairs: - μέσς medius; ὀγδοος octavus; τόσος tantus; παχύς pinguis; εἷς unus; νότιος; τρέω terreo; δέικνυμι dico; μέμονα memini; ποινή poena; ποιητής poeta; ἀγκυρα ancora; ναῦς navis; ναῦτης nauta. (Q2. Michaelmas, 1867).*

*From what cause do words come to have a sense different from that which their etymology suggests? Illustrate by analysing [two Greek quotations follow] In what languages or periods of language is fallacy from this source most likely to occur? (Q12. Michaelmas, 1867).*

In all of these questions there is a tacit acceptance of the idea of 'original' etymological roots, and that both the meaning and form of words derived from common roots may diverge across time and linguistic boundaries, although certain phonetic similarities show that these mutations share a common source (as the examiner responsible for Q2. Michaelmas 1867 surely has in mind). There is also an implication that later lexical forms may be more precisely understood by relating them to their original roots. This is the principle which guides Hopkins in his diary notes and is more explicitly propounded by George Marsh.

Other questions demand an understanding of how the grammar of a language can alter, both diachronically (over time), and synchronically (from region to region):

*Mention any points in which the Homeric syntax offers a contrast to that of the Attic writers. (Q2. Easter, 1863).*

*At what periods in the development of the Classical Languages did a Science of Grammar exist or arise? (Q1. Trinity, 1866).*

*Estimate the difference in respect of vocabulary and style, between the Odyssey and the Iliad. (Q2. Trinity, 1866).*

*Illustrate Virgil's Antiquarianism. Is a similar tendency observable in other writers of his time? (Q11. Trinity, 1866).*

*"Different languages are more or less analytic, and the same language becomes more analytic as literature and refinement increase." Explain and illustrate this. (Q2. Michaelmas, 1866).*

*Give some accounts of the origin of the dual number in Greek nouns and verbs, and mention peculiarities in its usage. Is it found in all the dialects, and at all periods of the language? (Q3. Michaelmas, 1866).*

*Shew that the adverbs in Greek and Latin were originally cases of nouns and pronouns. (Q6. Michaelmas, 1866).*

*Mention the principal differences between Attic and Hellenistic grammar, pointing out where they can be referred to known laws of change in language. (Q7. Easter, 1867).*

*Explain and illustrate the statement that all verbs are originally intransitive. By what process did transitive verbs acquire that force? (Q4. Michaelmas, 1867).*

*Did the language of Homer seem antiquated to Aeschylus and Sophocles? (Q6. Michaelmas, 1867).*

*Give instances of words or idioms in Latin which appear to belong to colloquial language. Mention colloquial uses of the words rex, nomen, grandis, beatus. (Q8. Michaelmas, 1867).*

This sensitivity to the fluidity of grammar across time and geographical space, and that it is only a relative guide to correct usage, may well come as a surprise to those accustomed to thinking of the nineteenth-century educational establishment as dictatorial in its attitudes to grammatical propriety. In the years when Hopkins is at Oxford, an understanding of the evolutionary nature of language is beginning to be taught. In early adulthood Hopkins was made aware of the flexibility of language and given the intellectual equipment with which to question the apparently fixed rules which govern syntax, but which are in fact formulated long after a language has been operating. In the case of English these rules were largely the imposition of scholars of the Enlightenment, desirous that English should be as rigorously disciplined as Classical Latin and Greek seemed then. Hopkins studied the methods and discoveries of the new science of

linguistics, which set about dismantling the idea of a single, standardised and authoritative grammar of a language. This would have given him confidence in his own conviction that the 'rules' of English syntax were sufficiently flexible to accommodate the bold constructions he later experimented with in his poetry. Some of the set questions actively encouraged students to make links between English and the languages of antiquity in this respect:

*How far is it true that the modern use of auxiliary verbs may be discovered in Classical Greek and Latin?* (Q1. Easter, 1863).

*In what different ways is the English Language allied to the Latin? Compare with this the relations between Greek and Latin.* (Q12. Trinity, 1866).

In particular, the idea that one part of speech (the adverb) has a fundamental relationship with another, radically different part of speech (nouns and adjectives; Q6. Michaelmas, 1866), will have reverberations for those familiar with Hopkins's tactic of employing words in syntactically ambiguous positions. There was also a question set in Michaelmas 1866 asking candidates to illuminate the exact meaning of participles in six Greek passages (participles are typically problematic in Hopkins's verse), and another from Easter 1867, asking for comment on grammatical peculiarities in five Latin and Greek sentences. Clearly teasing out syntactic difficulties and irregularities ('bad grammar' if one were to be prescriptive rather than descriptive) is a skill Hopkins was expected to demonstrate when working with Classical Literature, and one which he may therefore have expected of his own readers when coping with his syntax.

Understanding the evolutionary nature of language, and that there is nothing inherently superior in the style and diction of earlier centuries, would have sharpened the belief Hopkins often expresses in his letters, that archaism in poetry is a weak affectation, rather than the mark of sophistication and elevation which most Victorian poets took it to be. It

may have encouraged his interest in regional variation in pronunciation and in dialect forms and usages, which Hopkins starts to record in his diaries with genuine interest and without prejudice from this time onwards, and which later comes to be one of his marks of inscaped language: the peculiar specificity of local forms.

Other, occasional questions give some insight into further linguistic abilities Hopkins was expected to have. Simple scansion of Latin and Greek verses was seemingly already beneath candidates at this level. The following question takes for granted that meaning may be ambiguous due to possible alternatives in stressing and intoning lines. It also encourages the use of diacritics to clarify preferred interpretations, obviously of great significance when reading Hopkins's verse:

*Add the breathings and accents to the following lines, and notice any important differences that depend on them:- [ followed by six quotes in Greek] (Q9. Easter, 1863).*

Students from Hopkins's time may have been taught about how stress operates on different morphemic elements within words:

*Give the chief rules for the accentuation of enclitics. What peculiarities in the pronunciation of enclitics do these rules indicate? Are there any enclitics in Latin? (Q10. Michaelmas, 1867).*

As well as which rhythmic effects are common to specific languages:

*Tardior ut paulo graviorque veniret ad aures, Spondeos stabiles in iura paterna recepit.<sup>5</sup> How far was this carried in the different kinds of Latin poetry in which the Iambic metre is found? (Q11. Michaelmas, 1867).*

One question set for the Trinity 1866 paper strikes the reader of Hopkins quite forcibly:

*Shew the influence of Naval pursuits on the Imagery of the Greek Language. (Q10.).*

To suppose that the connection between Hopkins's naval predilection and this exam question (or the professor who set it), is anything more than coincidental would be fanciful, but it is perhaps indicative of the kind of relationship between a people's culture



and history and their language which Hopkins and other Classics students were encouraged to consider: not merely that people express their culture and history in a language, but that culture and history may condition the development of a language.

Finally, there are frequent questions asking candidates to comment on the force of specific tenses and moods of verbs as used by certain authors. The opinion that Hopkins was clumsy in his use of parts of speech, or miscalculated their appropriateness in the context in which he uses them, cannot seriously be held in the knowledge of how carefully he was trained to scrutinize the function and force of every lexical item in a sentence. Contrary to the opinion of many early reviewers and critics of Hopkins's posthumously published poems (including Bridges), the poet's judgement was not mistaken regarding the propriety and effectiveness of his syntax, but only perhaps in the ability of many readers to examine it as rigorously as he was used to in his own reading.

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<sup>5</sup> 'So that it might come to the ears a little more slowly and more weightily, it admitted steady spondees according to native laws.'

## 'The Music of Beowulf'<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the audience heard either a sequence of uncomprehended Gaelic or the clumsy words of an unsatisfactory translation. Philologists do not in any great multitude flock to Aeolian Hall (Bond St. in the City of London).

I was there to pay my rent, to amuse myself, to increase my mental holdings. In a London dead from the neck up the three or four possible concerts a fortnight were the only phenomena a man could inspect with any cerebral interest; and in an England scared out is its nether garment by the terror of anything likely to cause thought in any form, mild, milder or mildest music was the one last and only remaining subject that any editor (the one last and only remaining editor) thought it safe to allow me to turn loose on.

Snivelling war profiteers, abject lackeys etc. disliked "colloquial language"; any form of mental correlation, the "perception of relations" which Aristotle long since noted as symptomatic of mental life were not at that season in favour. The sottisier<sup>2</sup> was filled to overflowing; if I am to recall the London of that dreary day, I shd. also recall the fattening editor of a by-a-new-title-owned and even-today-extant weekly telling me that the word "aphrodisiac" should never appear in print. I confess that I had mentioned the ballet. However the writing on the wall, put there I suppose by the mysterious "black 'and" or "'idden 'and" wuz:

<sup>1</sup> This unpublished essay by Pound is document YCAL MSS 43, Box 69, folder 3045 in the Pound Archive at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Its interest is partly in that it shows how Pound considers all 'primitive' poetry to be more or less equivalent. Pound's typewriter ribbon seems to have been in need of replacement: some of the ascenders are not fully inked, although the typescript is easily legible in most places. My policy has been to correct obvious mistakes, such as repetition, or omission of a letter or word where the sense clearly demands it. Proper nouns and adjectives of nationality have been capitalised and variations on 'Ang:Sax' have been expanded. I have chosen not to expand Pound's characteristic abbreviations 'wd.' and 'shd.'. Pound's cancellations are not reproduced and in several places I have added commas, where I think the sense is ambiguous. Paragraphing, quotation marks, underlining and capitalization are all Pound's. Also included in the same box at the Pound Archive are: a programme (undated) for the 'Songs of the Hebrides' performance by the Kennedy-Frasers, to which Pound refers in

## DEFENSE DU MOT JUSTE

The corpse of British intelligence law in the street, in France the terrassier were trying to put things tidy. And so forth ...

At any rate music was supposed to be "safe", no activity in that sphere was thought likely to depreciate the value of anybody's electros,<sup>3</sup> or cause discontent with the monopoly of book distribution.

Hence I had leisure to listen to "The Songs of the Hebrides", and to one in particular that differed radically from the rest.

It differed not only from weaving and reaping songs, and from the Seal-Woman's song, and the songs of faery, but it differed from Kishmul's Galley and from the songs of Death.

And whereas the associations of these others were musical associations, the familiarity of the Aillte started a totally different train of reminiscence.

The song had finished before I had been able to superpose it. For twenty years thereabouts I have had in my head a few fragments of Anglo-Saxon:

Hlude waeron hy la hlude  
Tha hy ofer thon long rydon  
Waeron anmode, tha hy ofer thon lond rydon.<sup>4</sup>

The misunderstood principle of alliterative verse is possibly radical in all proper vers libre in our language. That verse decayed, as they say "early", so that Chaucer holds it in

the essay; and three blank cablegrams from the 1920s with 'Beowulf - Wyatt Cambridge UP 1894' written across one and an accurate transcription of the first fourteen lines of *Beowulf* on the other two.

<sup>2</sup> I am uncertain what Pound means by this. A 'sottise' is a foolish remark.

<sup>3</sup> ? Electrum (a precious metal)?

<sup>4</sup> Actual text is: *Hlude wæran hy, la hlude, ða hy ofer þone hlæw ridan / wæran anmode, ða hy ofer land ridan*. From lines 3-4 of an Anglo-Saxon charm in Henry Sweet, *An Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 7th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 104. If 'twenty years or thereabouts' is accurate, Pound is writing in 1924-1925 (he studied the charm at Hamilton in 1904-1905).

ridicule.<sup>5</sup> There is however nothing to show that it didn't have six or eight centuries of vigorous, though not very much "written", life.

Landor imagined Ovid trying his hand at it in exile, and the Gaetic Prince says that dialogue: "I order the loudest voices to sing my warsong; and there is such a clatter of what ye Romans call consonants and alliterations, ye would imagine them to be clubs and swords against shields and bucklers."

However Landor himself had but a very vague idea of how good Saxon verse was made. There is however, nothing to suppose that it began with the fragments known to us, or that it should not have risen from, or been early influenced by, Greek hexameter. Whoever first made it, or whoever shaped it as we now know it, did not make a stupid supine and superficial imitation of verse built on a different system.

The shift of accent in Greek and Latin quantitative measures is the life of their rhythm. The same is true of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, which died in monotony when Chaucer's more immediate forebears began to count the syllables on their fingers.

Which things being, so I proceeded from Bond St. to Kensington, and earnestly endeavoured to fit the words of *The Seafarer* to the tune of the Aillte. That is to say, I had scented some sort of relation between Anglo-Saxon metric and the music I had heard in the Kennedy-Fraser concert. *The Seafarer* did not fit. Neither did the lines I have quoted. I finally turned to Skeat and tried a bit of the *Beowulf*.

Despite the overwhelming tradition of British song writers there ARE poems which do NOT fit merely any old tune. There are, and thank the twelve Gods of Latium for it, there are poems which can not be sung either to the 'Wearing of the Green', or

<sup>5</sup> Pound refers to the Parson's comment (in lines 42-3 of his tale), that 'I am a Southren man; / I kan nat geeste 'rum, ram, ruf,' by lettre'. *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F. N. Robinson and others, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 287.

'Tipperary', and which can not be placed advantageously amid the ash-can foliage of British-imitated-from-German "ballad" music.

I invite the incredulous to try to sing *Beowulf* to 'God Save our Ggrracious ...' or to 'Butterflies', or to Mr. F. Bridge his "Isobel".

Two lines of the *Beowulf* lais<sup>6</sup> that I hit upon fitted the opening of the Aillte; the third line did NOT fit, and no amount of distortion or twisting, or any within-reason-possible treatment of the text wd. bring it into accord with the melody.

In final disgust I threw out that line and went on to the next one. The fourth lines of my Saxon fitted the tune quite neatly, and I proceeded thence to the end, or at least for some few lines further.

I then called on the indefatigable collectress, editress, scald, Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser, who has presumably saved the music and song of the Isles for a gradually more grateful (by courtesy) civilization.

"Oh yes, the song was different from the others. There were none like it in the collection. They had got it from old Calum." (The printed edition says 'Calum Macmillan', but does not explain him. Calum was "an hundred and ten or an hundred and forty", or perhaps only 93, but he was, as is proper in legends, the LAST, the positively last of the Sacred Singers, and his disgust with the labour songs, and the rest of "Gaelic folk music" was both definite and unconcealed. "He wouldn't stay in the cabin if anyone sang them. He would get up and go out."

The flight of the Queen of Lochlin with Aillte of the Fayne – the descent of the King of Lochlin on the Fayne, and nine kings with him – destruction of the invaders. As sung by Ossian to Patrick.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Lay'?

That is the tradition, that is what Calum said he was singing. Books, among the daughters of Memory, are the flat-chested and high-brow sisters. No one in Morocco wd. be surprised at a singer singing or an orchestra playing you the "dinner music" of a "King" dead half a thousand years.

This traditional music is the "heroic chant" of the Gael. It is, I think it fairly safe to suppose, the sort of rhythm to which the Saxon chanted.

Satisfied thus far I relapsed into habitual profanity.

Two of the liens of your infernal tune fit quite nicely, but what in the name of Sheol<sup>7</sup> did you do when you came to the third one?

"Oh" said unperturbed collectress, "the third line was very uninteresting, and so we just left it out."

Not only does the Saxon fit the tune, but the tune brings the text into life. Patuffa Kennedy-Fraser has sung it over in private, but one can not expect Gaelic enthusiasts to spread the glory of the Sassenach. I think both the Kennedy-Frasers were somewhat uninterested by the coincidence. If you believe a tune dates to Ossian, the existence of words which fit it, and which date to the Eighth Century only, probably gives you no thrill.

I have no theories as to who got it from which. The difficulties I have encountered in trying to get contemporary singers even to sing simple Provençal have been such that I have no intention of trying to persuade my cantor to warble in Anglo-Saxon. If, however, any such intrepid vocalist should arise, he can get the "accompaniment" to the melody from the distinguished and, I believe, well-known firm of Boosey and Co. for the sum of two shillings English.

As to "how":

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<sup>7</sup> Hebrew underworld.



I have perhaps wailed elsewhere in print on the terrors of musical notations. No-one, so far as I know, save Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser has even been able to sing the wilder and more ferocious songs of the Hebrides. Even her daughter shows signs of depressing and horrible traces of Christian respectability. Christianity may have its own uses, but it has no musical use. Many things are all right in their place, soup, for example, in the tureen, but not ... and so forth ... there are many places where one does not want even a good soup.

Salvador Daniel wrote a good book on Arabic music, but the music he printed certainly will not cause any musician to play Arabic music, or any piece of Arabic music that he has not already heard.

I strongly suggest that a great amount of the Hebridean song is not sung in even bars. The laziness of musicians may make it easier to sell off an edition of a song that looks simple on paper.

Finding the music so printed, it remains for the prospective singer either to listen quite attentively to the scald, until he, she or it learns what the scald is doing; or failing the opportunity to learn thus orally, the reader may bear in mind that this tune, whether the words be sung in Gaelic or in Anglo-Saxon, is not a tame parlour ditty. The accents must be gnarled, bitten, snarled, hurled out of the throat; it is not a soft song to sing from a cushion. And where the short notes are "appogiature", or used as such, the term "appoggiatura"<sup>8</sup> is a very mild and gentle term in comparison with the bite and howl of the Gaelic.

The last line of the Gaelic expresses a satisfaction that none of the Lochlainn escaped. The delight in the death of something as loathsome to a mediaeval Gael as, let

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<sup>8</sup> 'Appoggiatura' is a grace-note or passing note. Whether Pound's 'appogiature' is a spelling mistake, or has a related meaning in Italian, I do not know.

us say, a contemporary bureaucrat is to enlightened modern man, is not a tea-party emotion. Our singers lack moral force.

### Scansion of 'Canto I'

The stressed syllables have been marked in bold, rather than with inter-lineal diacritics, in order to save space. A recording of Pound reading the poem (made in 1958) has been used to determine where these stressed syllables fall: idiosyncrasies are his.<sup>1</sup> Where I detect a secondary stress, the syllable has been underlined. Here other ears may disagree with mine, hearing primary stress in some instances. The last nine lines of the poem have not been included here, as the Saxonised rhythm dissipates when the translator's voice breaks through his translation to address Andreas Divus: it barely re-establishes itself for the brief fragment of the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite.

#### 'Canto I'

AND **then** went **down** to the **ship**,  
 Set **keel** to **breakers**, **forth** on the **godly sea**, and  
 We set up **mast** and **sail** on that **swart ship**,  
**Bore** **sheep** **aboard** her, and our **bodies** also  
**Heavy** with **weeping**, and **winds** from **sternward**  
**Bore** us out **onward** with **bellying canvas**,  
**Circe's** this **craft**, the **trim-coifed** **goddess**.  
**Then** sat we **amidships**, **wind** **jamming** the **tiller**,  
**Thus** with **stretched sail**, we went over **sea** till **day's end**.  
**Sun** to his **slumber**, **shadows** o'er all the **ocean**,  
**Came** we **then** to the **bounds** of **deepest water**,  
 [To the **Kimmerian** lands, and **peopled cities**]<sup>2</sup>  
**Covered** with **close-webbed mist**, **unpierced** ever  
 With **glitter** of **sun-rays**  
 Nor with **stars** **stretched**, nor looking back from **heaven**  
**Swartest night** stretched over **wretched men** there.  
 The **ocean** **flowing backward**, **came** we **then** to the **place**  
**Aforesaid** by **Circe**.  
**Here** did they **rites**, **Perimedes** and **Eurylochus**,  
 And **drawing sword** from my **hip**  
 I **dug** the **ell-square** **pitkin**;  
**Poured** we **libations** unto **each** the **dead**,  
**First mead** and **then sweet wine**, **water** mixed with **white flour**.  
**Then** **prayed** I **many** a **prayer** to the **sickly death's-heads**;  
 As **set** in **Ithaca**, **sterile bulls** of the **best**  
 For **sacrifice**, **heaping** the **pyre** with **goods**,

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound Reading his Poetry*. New York. Caedmon Publishers, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Pound misses this line out in his performance.

A sheep to Tiresias only, black and a bell-sheep.  
Dark blood flowed in the fosse,  
 Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides  
 Of youths and of the old who had borne much;  
 Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,  
 Men many,<sup>3</sup> mauled with bronze lance heads,  
 Battle spoil, bearing yet dreary arms,  
 These many crowded about me; with shouting,  
 Pallor upon me, cried to my men for more beasts;  
 Slaughtered the herds, sheep slain of bronze;  
 Poured ointment, cried to the gods,  
 To Pluto the strong, and praised Proserpine;  
Unsheathed the narrow sword,  
 I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead,  
 Till I should hear Tiresias.  
 But first Elpenor came, our friend Elpenor,  
 Unburied, cast on the wide earth,  
 Limbs that we left in the house of Circe,  
 Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged other.  
 Pitiful spirit. And I cried in hurried speech:  
 "Elpenor, how art thou come to this dark coast?  
 "Cam'st thou afoot, outstripping seamen?"  
 And he in heavy speech:  
 "Ill fate and abundant wine. I slept in Circe's ingle.  
 "Going down the long ladder unguarded,  
 "I fell against the buttress,  
 "Shattered the nape-nerve, the soul sought Avernus.  
 "But thou, [O]<sup>4</sup> King, I bid remember me, unwept, unburied,  
 "Heap up mine arms, be tomb by sea-board, and inscribed:  
 "A man of no fortune, and with a name to come.  
 "And set my oar up, that I swung mid fellows."

And Anticlea came, whom I beat off, and then Tiresias Theban,  
 Holding his golden wand, knew me, and spoke first:  
 "A second time? why? man of ill star,  
 "Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region?  
 "Stand from the fosse, leave me my bloody bever  
 "For soothsay."

And I stepped back,  
 And he strong with the blood, said then: "Odysseus  
 "Shalt return through spiteful Neptune, over dark sea[s]<sup>5</sup>,  
 "Lose all companions." And then Anticlea came.

<sup>3</sup> Pound reverses these words in his performance, 'Many men', and adds an unstressed syllable, which seems to be 'are'.

<sup>4</sup> Omitted from the recorded performance.

<sup>5</sup> Singular in Pound's recitation.

## Saxonist Work by Later Poets

This appendix does not claim to be exhaustive, but indicates the direction of future research. Poets are listed alphabetically.

### Basil Bunting

Dark Age Britain is of central importance to *Briggflatts*. Anglo-Saxon culture is one part of that broader interest. In several documents of the early 1930s Bunting expressed admiration for Auden's Anglo-Saxon experiments in 'Paid on Both Sides',<sup>1</sup> and a letter of 1978 discusses *The Battle of Brunanburh*.<sup>2</sup> Peter Makin has recently written:

*Beowulf* and "The Fight at Finnsburg" give a series of phrases and cadences to his *Briggflatts* and to the earlier *Spoils*. So when in *The Spoils* we come upon this war scene:

Rosyth guns sang. Sang tide through cable  
for Glasgow burning:  
    "Bright west,  
    Pale east..."

we are almost certainly in the presence of another illusion of dawn, from the Finnsburg fragment, where the warrior shouts:

"...gables burn!"  
Hnaef then shouted, - battle-young king, -  
"This is not day dawns from the east, nor yet does a  
    dragon fly here..."<sup>3</sup>

I am unconvinced by Makin's specific comparison, although his opening generalization is likely to be correct. In a lecture on metre, Bunting talks of 'the unstressed syllables [of Anglo-Saxon verse] trooping around in considerable disorder. That disorder is the seed

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Peter Makin, *Bunting: The Shaping of his Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Basil Bunting on Poetry*, ed. by Peter Makin (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. xiv-xv.

of variety, and gives the old verse its liveliness and suppleness.<sup>4</sup> The rhythms of Anglo-Saxon (or Pound's interpretation of it) are audible in lines from *Briggflatts*:

Unscarred ocean,  
day's swerve, swell's poise, pursuit,  
he blends, balances, drawing leagues under the keel  
to raise cold cliffs where tides  
knot fringes of weed.  
No tilled acre, gold scarce,  
walrus tusk, whalebone, white bear's liver.  
Scurvy gnaws, steading smell, hearth's crackle.<sup>5</sup>

### Seamus Heaney

The influence on early Heaney of Anglo-Saxon at several stages removed (via Hopkins) might repay further investigation. I suspect that the similarity between the rhythms of 'Digging' and Anglo-Saxon prosody is accidental: apart from the two lines of that poem which Heaney quotes in the introduction to his translation of *Beowulf*, the correspondence is not close.<sup>6</sup> The idea of Cædmon as a rustic poet (a kind of early John Clare), has also caught Heaney's imagination, as his poem 'Whitby-sur-Moyola' bears witness.<sup>7</sup> There is room for work on Heaney's translation of *Beowulf*, which needs to be unshackled from the unhelpful and uncritical journalism that has surrounded it (for example Edward Mendelson's comment on the dust jacket that Heaney is 'the one living poet who can rightly claim to be the *Beowulf* poet's heir').<sup>8</sup>

### Geoffrey Hill

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Basil Bunting, *Collected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> *Beowulf*, trans. by Seamus Heaney (London: Faber, 1999), p. xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Seamus Heaney, *The Spirit Level* (London: Faber, 1996), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Conor McCarthy makes some elementary mistakes in following the fairly obvious lead Heaney's introduction offers into notions of linguistic purity Anglo-Irish relations. Conor McCarthy, 'Language and History in Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*', *English*, 50 (2001), 149-58. Graham Caie, a teacher of Anglo-Saxon, is understandably pleased that someone with the prominence of a Nobel prize-winner should draw attention to a part of the curriculum often thought to be under siege, but this gratitude perhaps colours his



*Mercian Hymns* was briefly dealt with in the conclusion. Hill combines mediaeval and twentieth-century images of the Midlands, in a manner which ought to be incongruous, but somehow rises above mere incongruity. Like Auden, the hybridity of the work is striking. The function of Germanic praise-poetry as a model in *Mercian Hymns* might offer a new avenue of exploration.

### David Jones

While Jones's mediaeval interests lie more with Arthurian and Celtic material, the beasts of battle from *Maldon* and *Brucanburh* are alluded to in *In Parenthesis*.<sup>9</sup> Anglo-Saxon history, pre-history and etymology is woven into the fabric of *The Anathemata*.<sup>10</sup> The final plate in *The Anathemata* is of an inscription Jones made of lines 39 to 41 of *The Dream of the Rood*, placed between pages 240 and 241 as a kind of found poem. At first, the Anglo-Saxon poem was known only as a fragmented, 'found' text, inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross which had been broken up in 1642 (the full text was 'found' in a different sense, at Vercelli in the nineteenth century). Jones starts his inscription at the same point (line 39 of the Vercelli-text) that the Ruthwell fragment begins. To my knowledge, the iconicity of Anglo-Saxon poetic texts is not exploited by any other modern poet.

### Denise Levertov

Levertov is the only female poet I have been able to find who has made use of Anglo-Saxon material. Curiously, she first came across the story of Cædmon in John Green's précis of Bede in the 1855 edition of Green's *History of the English People*.<sup>11</sup> Her poem

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view of Heaney's translation too much. Graham Caie, 'Beowulf - Dinosaur, Monster or Visionary Poem?', *The European Messenger*, 10/2 (2001), 68-70.

<sup>9</sup> David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 2nd edn (London: Faber, 1937, 1963), pp. 54 & 202.

<sup>10</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is one of his sources. See, for example, David Jones, *The Anathemata*, 3rd edn (London: Faber, 1952, 1972), pp. 146, 154, 159 & 170.

<sup>11</sup> Denise Levertov, *Breathing the Water* (New York: New Directions, 1987), p. 86.

'Caedmon' opens a sequence which includes poems that rework material from Julian of Norwich: an association that might repay further exploration.

### Edwin Morgan

Morgan's studies of Anglo-Saxon at university were interrupted by the War and his service in the desert campaign. He learnt Anglo-Saxon using Albert Cook's *A First Book in Old English* and the ninth edition (1922) of Sweet's *Reader*.<sup>12</sup> In 1939, writing of a piece of sculpture, Morgan uses an alliterative accentual line of (usually) four stresses:

Now the stoned ocean shudders,  
The shape of the sea is the wax of a ghost  
In time bound, the tame bend  
Of the bone-team-beaten tide is tensed  
To the bolt of duration's chances,  
The stance of the waters is wax.<sup>13</sup>

Morgan has also extended the body of 'English Riddles', composing more in the manner of *The Exeter Book*.<sup>14</sup>

### Bernard O'Donoghue

Rather than translating the Anglo-Saxon *Wulf and Eadwacer*, O'Donoghue's 'Wulf and Eadwacer' updates the dramatic situation of the original, by close (but not slavish) paraphrase. Colloquial idiom (such as 'One word though / And we're both finished. We're done for.'), draws attention to that which is thematically contemporary in *Wulf and Eadwacer* (often thought to be an obscure poem).<sup>15</sup> 'The Pleasures of the Circus' wittily parodies the gnomic catalogue of superlatives from *Maxims II*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Information from a letter to the present author, 2 February 1998: 'My Anglo-Saxon studies began in 1938-1939 and were taken up again after the war in 1946-1947.'

<sup>13</sup> Edwin Morgan, *Collected Poems 1949-1987* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1990), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> See 'New English Riddles: 1'. Ibid., p. 127.

### Alexander Scott

Scott has translated the 'Seaman's Sang', *frae the West Saxon*, into Scots.<sup>17</sup> The Norse influence on Scots means that many more words cognate with Anglo-Saxon are available to a writer attempting to carry the sound effects of the original into a modern version. Scott's translation shares many qualities with Pound's. How archaic or contemporary his idiom is, I am unable to judge.

### Tom Scott

Tom Scott, a poet in the Pound tradition, has translated *The Seafarer* and *The Dream of the Rood* into Scots. His 'The Seavaiger' is in convincing imitative metre. 'A Dream O The Rude' puts the poem into a curious, almost ballad-like, five-line rhyming stanza.<sup>18</sup>

### Gael Turnbull

Turnbull's poetry is often in sympathy with that of the mediaeval North. His interest is not just formal, but also lies in the occasion and function of poetry in early Germanic culture. He has written:

I have often had the wish that I might have been born into another age and had the fortune to be court poet, *makar* or *skald*, to a minor chief or lord, called upon to provide poems for particular occasions, to celebrate, to mourn, even to castigate or to jest, finding voice for public and private experience, in a context which could be defined.<sup>19</sup>

Accentual rhythms with clashing stresses are a characteristic of some of Turnbull's output.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bernard O'Donoghue, *The Weakness* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1991), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard O'Donoghue, *Here Nor There* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Scott, *Selected Poems 1943-1974* (Preston: Akros, 1975), pp. 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Scott, *The Collected Shorter Poems of Tom Scott* (London; Edinburgh: Agenda; Chapman, 1993), pp. 83-8.

<sup>19</sup> Gael Turnbull, *While Breath Persist* (Erin: The Porcupine's Quill, 1992), pp. 149-50.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see 'Knarsdale' and 'Scarcely I speak'. *Ibid.*, pp. 88 & 90-96.

Richard Wilbur

'Junk' uses the Anglo-Saxon smith Weyland as a presiding figure in its treatment of the transitory existence of man-made artefacts (Wilbur uses lines from *Waldere* about *Welandes worc* as an epigraph). Anglo-Saxon prosody and sound patterning is imitated effectively and the typographic lay-out of 'Junk' draws attention to this.<sup>21</sup> Wilbur has also written a meditation on *Beowulf*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Wilbur, *Advice to a Prophet* (London: Faber, 1952), pp. 15-17.

<sup>22</sup> 'Beowulf', in *New and Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1988), pp. 316-17.